
NZ HUNTER
Est. 2007 | APRIL / MAY 2024 | ISSUE 100
100 ISSUES



SeaSucker

be ready for any adventure with SeaSucker

CAMP I MARINE I SNOW I RACKS



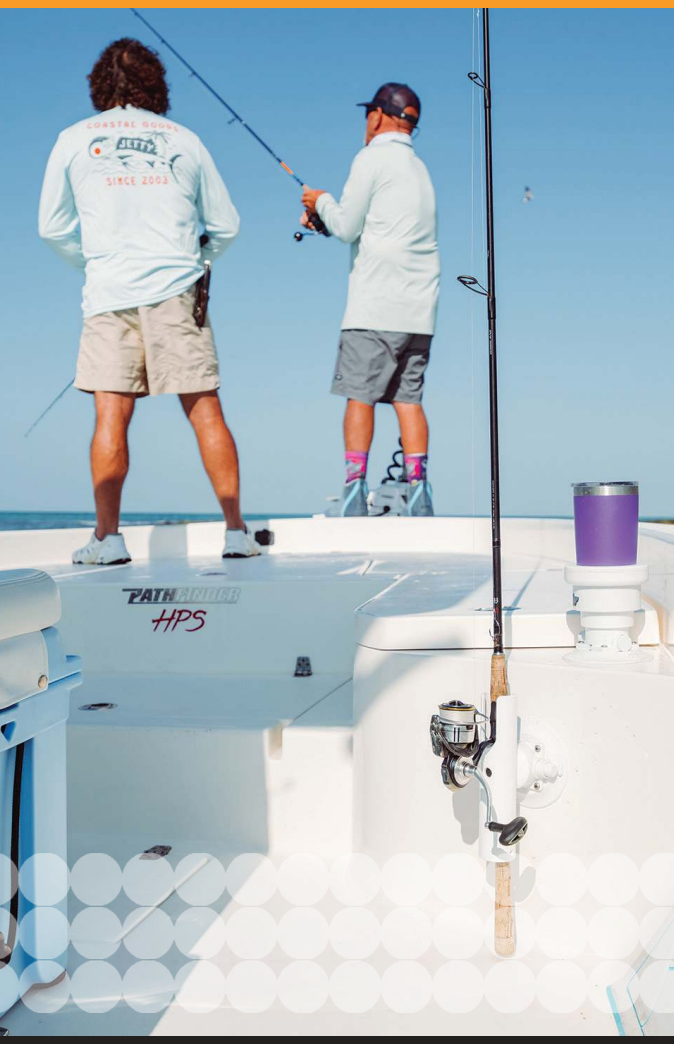
What is SeaSucker?

Let's get one thing out of the way: SeaSuckers are vacuum mounts, not suction cups. There's a big difference between the two.

First, each 6" SeaSucker vacuum mount is pull rated at over 210 lbs. Each 4.5" SeaSucker is pull rated at over 120 lbs. We'd like to see a suction cup that could pack that kind of punch. Suction cups also lack one incredibly important safety feature: the indicator band. SeaSucker's orange indicator band begins to appear once the vacuum mount loses some of its suction, letting you know it's time to re-pump well before it detaches.

Lastly, unlike suction cups, there's no licking required, unless you're into that sort of thing, and that's cool - we don't judge.











SeaSucker Innovation

SeaSucker's innovative vacuum mount technology seamlessly attaches racks to cars and marine accessories to boats and more without the worry of scratching surfaces or drilling holes. It's incredibly strong, versatile and easy to use.

Now you can take your adventures anywhere with any type of vehicle.

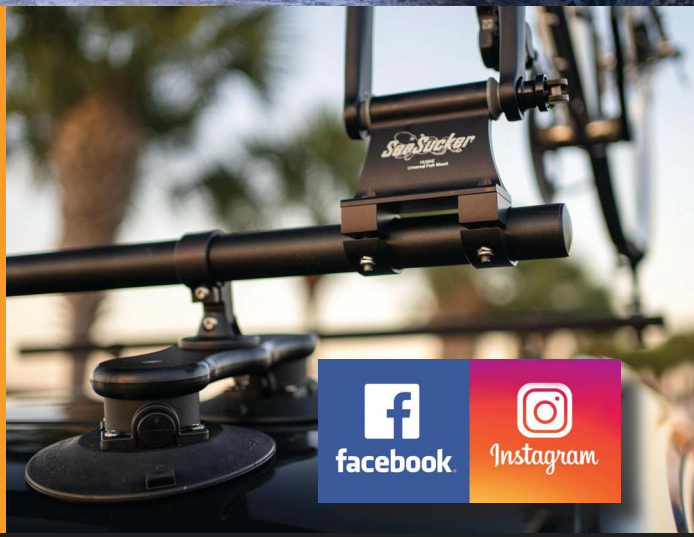


Get out there

Outfitting your vehicle or boat, to get outside and enjoy this awesome country of ours, just became easier.

No matter how you enjoy being out and about, the SeaSucker range has you covered.

C'mon, let's get attached to the outdoors.











Adventure

Testfire

How To

Food & Fauna

Events & Politics

04 **A Word from the Editor**

06 **She'll Be Right**
By Reuben Jones and Ronan Scott

12 **A West Coast Double**
By Dave Greig

18 **The Unforgettable**
By Jamie Fairbairn

22 **Six Sika Tips**
By Jamie Fairbairn

24 **Hard Luck Stories**
By Adam Ross

28 **The Ultimate NZ Hunting Cartridge, is it The New 7mm PRC?**
By Greg Duley

32 **Bushnell Photo Gallery**

32 **Looking Back**
By Willie Duley

40 **Mid Burn Monster**
By Mitch Thorn

48 **Hunting With The Tahr Father**
By Gwyn Thurlow

54 **Wahine and Wapiti**
By Hannah Rae

58 **Sub Seven Adventures**
By Greig Caigou

64 **Better Hunting – Getting the Most Out of Your Maps**
By Game Animal Council

68 **The One That Got Away**
By Luke Care

72 **Beretta Family Album**

76 **One More Roar**
By A Red Stag

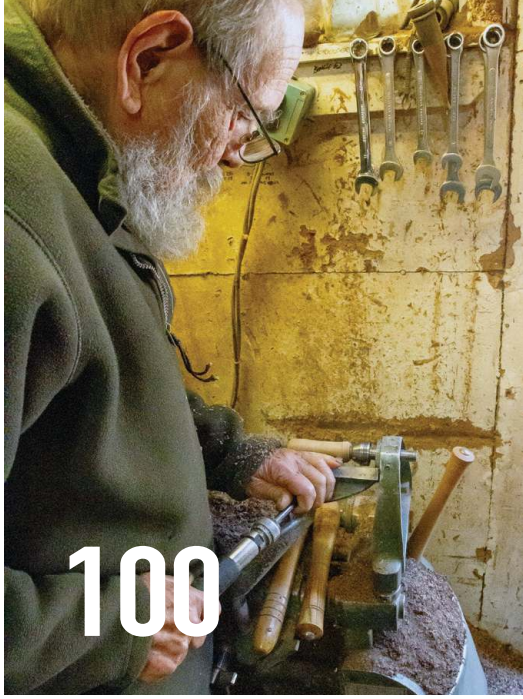
78 **Hunt For The Future**
By Game Animal Council

80 **Tahr Ballot Blocks – Adams Range**
By Points South

82 **Remote Huts – 20 Years Of Permolat**
By Andrew Buglass

86 **Kiwi Ultralight Quilt**
By Luke Care











88 **Swarovski EL Range 10x32 Binoculars**
By Greg Duley

90 **Infiray TH50 V2 Tube Scope**
By Johnny Bissell

94 **Cuddeback Network Trail Cameras**
By Luke Care

96 **Firstlite LZ Jacket**
By Luke Care

100 **Magview Spotting Scope S1 Adaptor**
By Luke Care

102 **Legends Of The Call**
By Tracey Morrow

106 **Hunting & Fishing Gallery**

108 **Top Tips**
By Corey Carston

115 **What's New**

118 **Slow Cooked and Smoked Venison Shoulder**
By Richard Hingston

120 **Subs**

NZ HUNTER MAGAZINE

www.nzhunter.co.nz

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Greg Duley

EDITOR: Luke Care

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Fi Duley

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Samantha Care

COLUMNISTS:
Johnny Bissell | Andrew Buglass
Greig Caigou | Corey Carston | Tim Gale
Richard Hingston | Michael McCormack
Cam Mckay | Callum Mckenzie | Tracey Morrow
Hannah Rae | Roy Sloan | Mike Spray
Gwyn Thurlow | Mitch Thorn | Cody Weller

COVER DESIGN: Intrigue Limited
www.intrigue.co.nz

PAGE DESIGN: Luke Care

PRINTER: Inkwise
www.inkwise.co.nz | ph 03 307 7930

DISTRIBUTION: Are Direct
www.aredirect.co.nz | ph 09 940 4921

DISCLAIMER: NZ Hunter is not responsible for mishaps of any kind which may occur from use of published loading data or from recommendations by staff writers. Further, neither the publishers nor the editors accept responsibility for the accuracy of statements or opinions expressed by freelance writers.

SUBS AND BACK ISSUES TO: subs@nzhunter.co.nz

ALL OTHER MAGAZINE ENQUIRIES TO:
luke@nzhunter.co.nz | Ph: 06 844 3807

POSTAL ADDRESS:
NZ Hunter Magazine,
545 Springfield Road, RD3,
Napier 4183

NZ HUNTER WELCOMES ARTICLES:
Submitted via a file transfer service (eg dropbox) or emailed as a word document and include photographs. Contributors will be paid in the month following publication.

The contributor acknowledges that the supplied images, text and/or related material is original, exclusive to NZ Hunter and in no way an infringement on the rights of others. NZ Hunter is entitled to use material at will, including but not limited to, NZ Hunter magazine, website, social media and future publications by NZ Hunter.

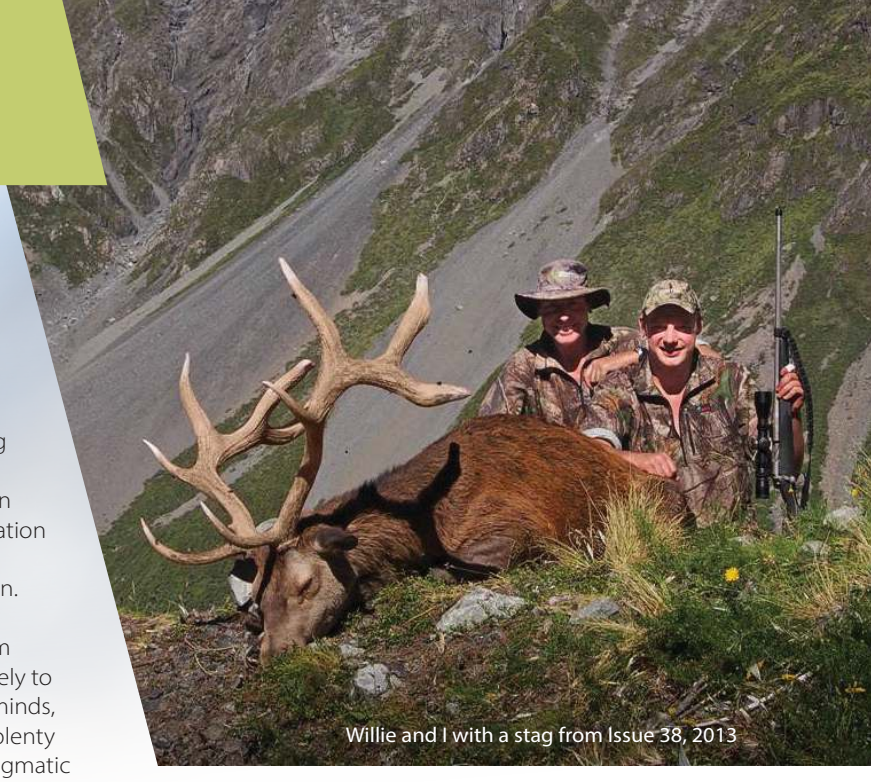
No responsibility is accepted for unsolicited material nor are the publishers under any obligation to print any matter received or correspondence that results.

ISSN 1178 – 007X

COVER PHOTO: Collage of recent NZ Hunter Covers

NZHU 02429-03/24

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



Willie and I with a stag from Issue 38, 2013

Well, back in 2007 when Fi and I first made the jump from primary production and agriculture to magazine production, who would have thought we'd still be here 17 years later producing our 100th issue!

What a great break that was! We ran a It has been a huge roller-coaster ride with the fight for common sense conservation and bureaucracy occupying such a large chunk of our time. The years have flown, and we really are making some gains now with the current government seeing the value in what we've been saying for many years. I know I'm preaching to the converted with our readers, but hey, I've got a captive audience so you've gotta listen!

We all need to become ambassadors for the great work the Wapiti, Sika and Tahr Foundations and Fish&Game NZ are doing in the outdoor recreation and conservation space. The public of New Zealand are largely oblivious to what we do and it's too easy for the ardent ideologists like Forest&Bird to trump up smear campaigns based on deliberate untruths and misleading information, which unfortunately the main stream media just seem to lap up. Look at what's happening right now with Forest&Bird attacking the process by which the FWF manages Wapiti area of Fiordland. Despite the fact that the FWF are the only group doing regular deer control backed up by vegetation monitoring to ensure agreed biodiversity outcomes are met, and running other major conservation projects like their predator trapping networks at the same time, the ideologists would rather cut off their nose to spite their face and risk kicking the whole project into touch. Getting rid of Wapiti out of Fiordland National Park will just mean they will be replaced by far larger numbers of Red deer that no one will pay to hunt, the biodiversity of the area will be destroyed, and all the money raised for the FWF's epic conservation programs will go out the window. One rabid individual told me he'd rather see no deer control done anywhere in Fiordland National Park despite wanting all deer gone, than have a hunter led group like the FWF doing it. The principle of hunters paying to do deer control and run other conservation programs had him in a tailspin. Unfortunately people like him are most unlikely to change their minds, but there are plenty of sensible pragmatic New Zealanders who will see the win win here if only we can get the message out. And that's where we can all help out. Any time you get the chance to help educate the uninformed, please take the time to do so in as non-confrontational manner as possible. Remember, we are the good guys who are actually putting feet on the ground in a lot of remote places where no one else is doing any conservation work - including the Department of Conservation.

And the other side of that coin is make sure we all are the good guys! We have to lead by example. I seem to find myself saying the same things over and over and the same selfish few continue to drag us all down with their actions. The only way we can get to these repeat offenders is by those of us who are in the hills with them, calling them out and educating them into doing the right thing - whether it be game animal management wise, behavior amongst other outdoor users, people we're sharing huts with etc. As I write this the first period Wapiti guys are in the hills and hopefully this year we won't get any reports of parties shooting any four year old 12 pointers and leaving rubbish and unburied faeces scattered about. The tahr ballot is also just around the corner, and as we said last issue, the seriously reduced resource we are all going to have to share and manage carefully into the future cannot stand individuals or groups making pigs of themselves on the bulls.

Again, try and get this message across to any hunters you meet who don't seem to be playing the game.

Looking back on the game animal management space 100 issues ago we have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. If we all work together and keep making progress it will be exciting to see what our game animal herds will look like by the 200th issue!

Opening weekend of the Waterfowl Season is coming up fast. If you have an opportunity, try and take a newbie waterfowler out with you, show them the ropes, and help them become passionate participants of our wonderful pastime. And teach them to process and utilise their birds. This is the only way we are going to preserve our sport into the future, by bringing new people into the sport, and harvesting only as many gamebirds as we can eat. Shooting to waste will not be tolerated by the non-hunting public, and we should not tolerate it amongst ourselves either. And even though one South Island region still has a ridiculously high bag limit, you don't have to keep shooting until you reach it – 50 mallards a day per person is absolute insanity and impossible to justify no matter how you look at it.

Ok, with that all behind us get on out into the hills and wetlands and have a jolly good time with friends and family while making sure you bring home something to eat!

Wishing you all a safe and successful roar and hot barrels for May 4th!

Greg

SPOT THE LOGO The winners for last issue are **Kevin Rowe** and **Warwick Wills**. Logos appeared on the Sierra BDX riflescope advert page 61 and the Glacier Southern Lakes Helicopter advert page 85

Visit www.nzhunter.co.nz for this issue's "Spot the Logo" Competition | Two prizes of $100 H&F vouchers to be won www.nzhunter.co.nz/spot-the-logo-competition | *You are looking for* ····➤

FREE online NZ hunter training

- Tips to maximise your hunting success
- Learn to hunt safely and ethically
- Modules, games and tips
- Earn certificates of achievement



Better Hunting Aotearoa

betterhunting.nz

Game Animal Council NEW ZEALAND



WE ALSO DO 0MOA & 20MOA PICATINNY SCOPE RAILS FOR TIKKA T3 AND T3X AS WELL AS FOR REM 700.

dpt MACHINISTS

OVER BARREL SUPPRESSORS

$385 fitted from $470 including a muzzle thread cap



Made of 7075 aircraft grade alloy - muzzle forward and over barrel suppressors available, from 192 grams they are the lightest range of centerfire suppressors in New Zealand

Over 60,000+ centerfire suppressors going strong around New Zealand and worldwide. DPT products come with a limited lifetime warranty. Barrel shortening, crowning and threading services available.

Unit 11, 706 Te Rapa Rd, Hamilton e. sales@dpt.co.nz

FREEPHONE 0800 800 037 www.dpt.co.nz

INTRIGUE 02432 - 03/24

SHE'LL BE RIGHT

WRITTEN BY ~ **REUBEN JONES AND RONAN SCOTT**

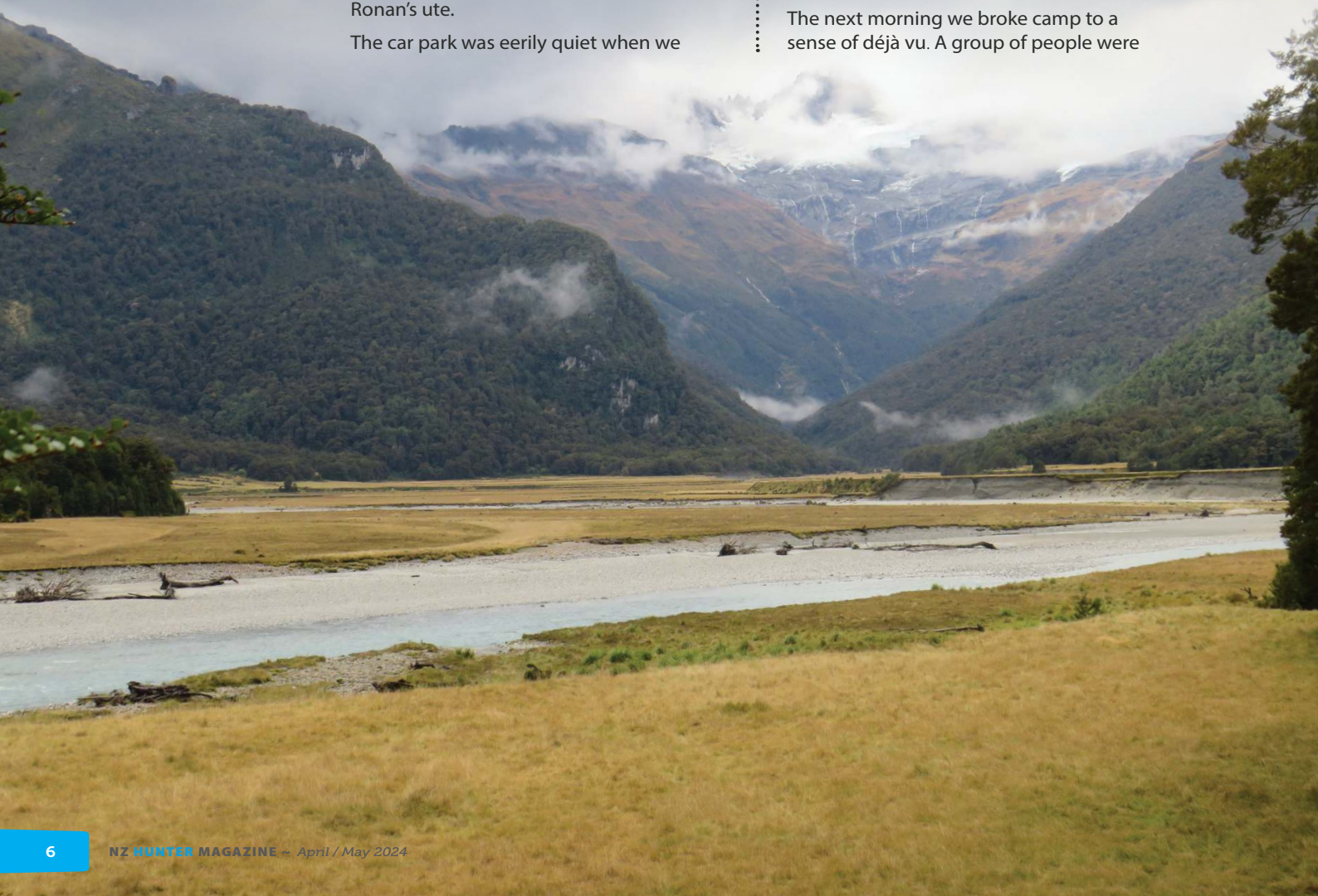
A SEVEN-DAY ADVENTURE WITH RECURRING THEMES OF SLEEPING UNDER ROCKS AND IN SWAMPS, WISHING FOR A ROPE, AND WALKING LONG INTO THE NIGHT

THIS PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE TOP OF THE LIST FOR MOST YOUNG NEW ZEALANDERS AT THE START OF APRIL. THE PROMISE OF WILDERNESS AREAS, ROARING STAGS WITH STRONG OTAGO BLOOD AND FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF GOLD MINERS HAD US LOCKED IN.

I had flicked through Moir's Guide and taken some screenshots of a route off the Divide and into South Westland from tramper's reports during the summer. Drowning my phone in a flooded bivvy bag only a few days earlier while hunting with my father in the Minaret was not part of my plan. These screenshots were now gone, but our "she'll be right" attitude had us full of confidence as we shoved gear into Ronan's ute.

The car park was eerily quiet when we arrived. With just a couple of vehicles scattered about, it was a far cry from the typical swarms of trampers here in summer. Just as we started throwing packs onto our backs, another truck arrived, and we heard the familiar clunk of ice axes hitting the ground. Unfortunately, hunting is one of those few sports where you'd rather not have anyone else about. The chance of them having the same destination in mind was low, but always causes slight unease. We went over to have a yarn and found out they only had three days which was a great relief. A short 30 kilometre jaunt to the Main Divide followed, and we stashed the walking poles, planning to return in a week or so on the way out. The excitement of discovering a couple of bucks that evening made us eager to see what the even more formidable countryside over the top had in store.

The next morning we broke camp to a sense of déjà vu. A group of people were





The beauty of hanging glaciers and dramatic West Coast vistas put the East Coast to shame

breaking the scrub line and heading for the top. We could see helmets swinging off a pack. Selfish thoughts once again come to mind. Are these hunters too? It turned out they were not; just an adventurous family on a mission for the day. **They set a good pace without overnight packs and we were glad for their route finding and help with a rope up a small amount of ice in the chute.** Once at the top, the beauty of hanging glaciers and dramatic West Coast vistas put the East Coast to shame. We spent far too long discussing the viability of late-season glacier travel with the trampers while resting on a warm and sunny snow-grass bench. Graciously accepting their Afghan biscuits we peered off the ledge. Now later in the day, we chose a ridge and sent it.

The tussock provided a relatively poor grip on the rock. We were glad to have waited for the dew to burn off, but our ridge soon turned to hundreds of metres of bluff. We took our only other option and set about sidling, which led us to a marginal ridge. With only a couple of hours of daylight left, that Moir's Guide would have provided a bit of reassurance. We took turns dropping packs and scurrying around the benches to find the best route down. Although any small misstep would have been certainly the end for one of us, we found our way off what we thought was the worst of it down to the scrub line just as the head torches came out. "At the rock biv in an hour for dinner", Ronan exclaimed.

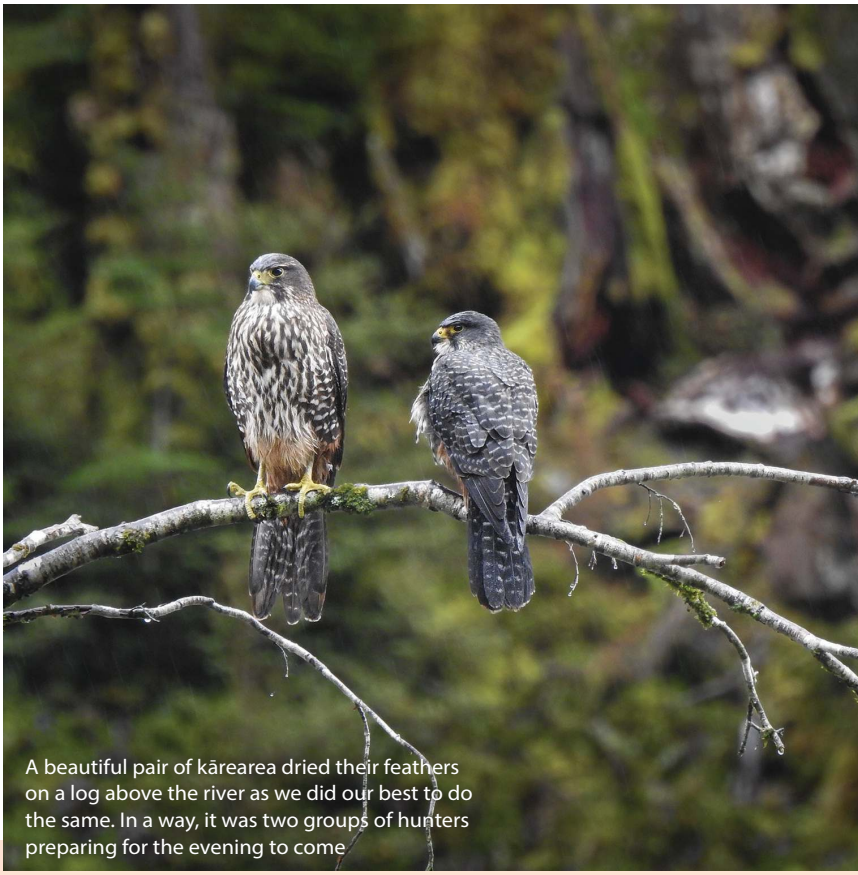
One hour passed and the dinner bell rang. There isn't anything more frustrating than wriggling and writhing down a heavily vegetated spur at night to emerge at the top of a waterfall. To wrap a climbing rope around a bit of scrub and abseil down would have saved a lot of scratches. This was the reality we faced countless times over the next few hours. We wondered if we'd picked the wrong creek and if there was an easier route just out of the range of our torchlight. **We pushed on and eventually popped out without any injury or loss of gear.** Reading of old gold miners using this as a route over the Divide made me sure we'd made a wrong turn. The rock biv we were hoping to camp under was playing hard to find. After half an hour of crawling about a swamp we rolled out the tent and prayed the tub floor would keep the water out.

As the sun rose and we could see what we had descended, it was no wonder that it was slow-going getting down. Ronan flicked his Dad a message, asking for the Moir's Guide description of the route, to find out if we had been on the money. We had decisions to make. With ice axes and rifles, getting back up the way we had come would be undertaken only by necessity. **The InReach chirped and the reply was not unexpected.** "Ronan, I'm a bit nervous to send this through". He didn't realise we had already done it without a route to follow, and were just seeing if there was an easier way out. It turned out we had followed it roughly correctly off the snow grass but went down the wrong creek.

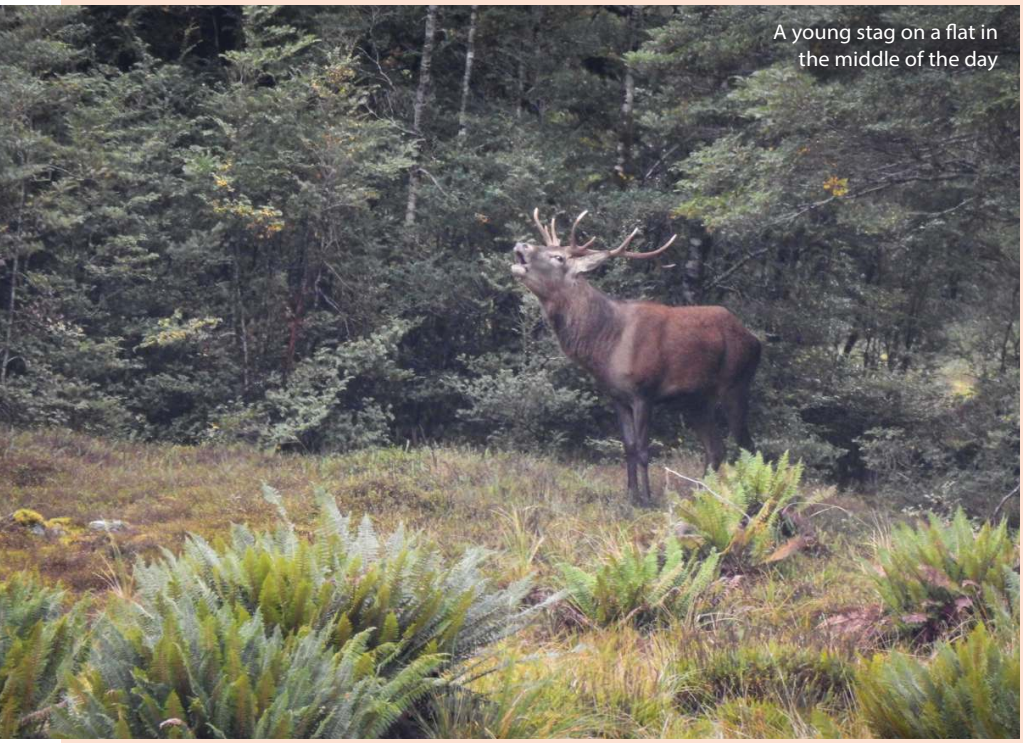
We still had plenty of food and a relatively good weather window. The decision was made to gun it down to the flats that night and hunt for a few days before making another crossing of the Main Divide further north to come out. The logistics involved would have to be sorted out at a later date. Once



We took turns dropping packs and scurrying around the benches to find the best route down



A beautiful pair of kārearea dried their feathers on a log above the river as we did our best to do the same. In a way, it was two groups of hunters preparing for the evening to come



A young stag on a flat in the middle of the day

again, predictions of dinner on the flats were far too optimistic. We were both a bit agitated, probably a product of having a terrible sleep, chafed balls and not eating enough. As I gazed at the glaciers between layers of clag, I saw a group of giant men walking along the ridge. At the time, I simply accepted what I had seen, but when I asked if Ronan had seen them he laughed. **I think this is probably the first time I've hallucinated on the hill.**

The banks of the river must slip regularly as they were terraced and unstable. At times boulder travel was possible but slippery and slow. The river was heavily silted and rising in the rain, and when we cut up the face to sidle around gorges we found the constant windfall and dense vegetation slow going. I recalled a hand-drawn map of the river system in the kitchen at Earnslaw Burn Station, showing a route from the 60s down the true right. I'd have loved to time-travel back 60 years for that day.

We picked up a strong deer trail later in the day and thought we were in the money for an evening stalk. The sign was fresh enough but all headed down valley. Soon enough, we arrived at a massive bluff. The deer had taken us to a dead end 200 vertically up from the river. This must have been a stag's summer hangout. Cold, wet and hungry, we bailed back to the river. I pulled some inner tube rubber out, and an attempt at a fire was made while Ronan dealt to the tent. It was dark and still raining. As we sat encased in sodden merinos, looking at a rising river with not many options on the current bank, I wasn't overly optimistic for the days to come. The fire spluttered to life and we wrung out the socks and clothes, concocted a good stew and crawled into the tent.

A dense mist engulfed the valley on daybreak. Still no roaring overnight, although the roar of the river may have drowned out stags above us. We tentatively waded through the silty water above the rapids, well aware of the consequences of a fall. Despite our best efforts there wasn't much dry in our packs after the last few days. The true left proved much better travel for this lower river section, although 500 metres an hour would still have been regarded as absolutely great going. A couple of old markers from deer culling days showed we were about to emerge

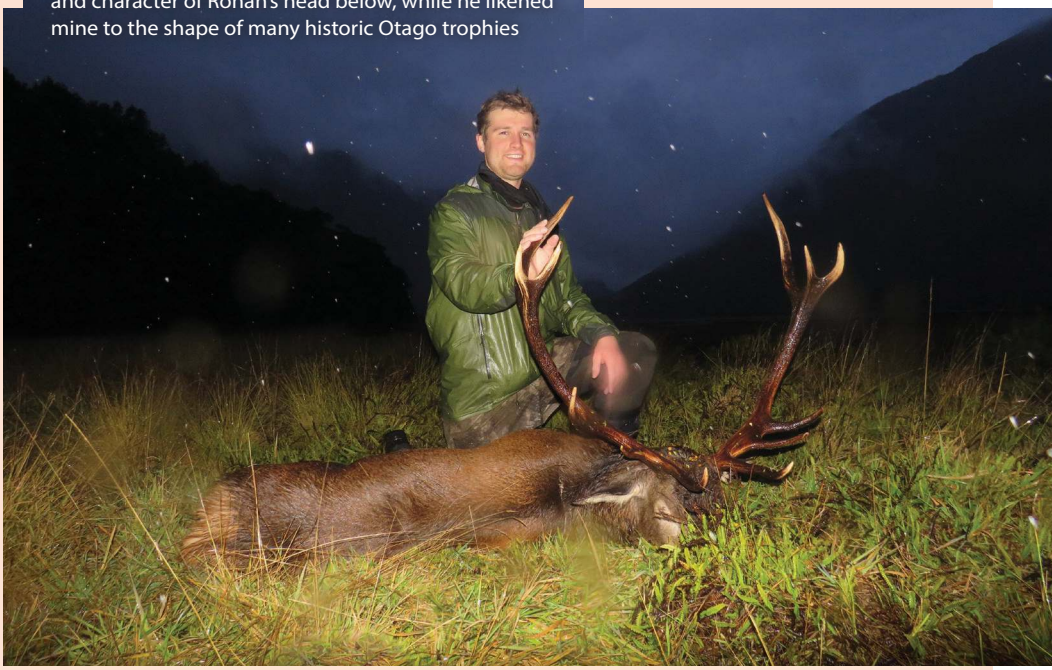
from the bush. As if by magic, a spiker appeared; the first deer of the trip seen after three solid days of effort. I've never been so excited to see a spiker before. We took refuge from the sandflies beside a massive rock and did our best to remedy the calorie deficit we'd been running with noodles, jet planes and pork crackle. Top tucker.

The events of that evening could not be scripted. The mist had cleared for patchy afternoon sun. We erected the sodden tent high up on a terrace to best reduce our scent on the flat. A beautiful pair of kārearea dried their feathers on a log above the river as we did our best to do the same. In a way, it was two groups of hunters preparing for the evening to come. Camera lenses, binoculars, rifle scopes and rangefinders all had a birthday. We perched on a vantage point to spy a number of young stags strutting around in the clearing. Ronan picked up a few hinds and stags on a bench further around that deserved a bit of a better look, so we made the call to stalk that way.

The bush here was very different from the valley we had traipsed down, with tall stag rubbings and wallows everywhere. We were moving too fast, bumping deer, but we wanted to get a good look at the main flat where we'd seen the action before nightfall. As we followed a line of scrub out into the clearing, a large mob of hinds suddenly appeared from the bush. **A stag was doing his best to keep them together and we watched as a hind tried to break from the group and went into the river.** The stag went berserk, corralling her back to his harem. Our hearts were racing, and the hardship of the last few days was instantly forgotten.

Just as we made the call to get within shooting range, the rain came back. Luckily, we spotted a huge mob of Canadian geese right in our path before they spooked, and snuck around the side to find a bunch of rotten crown fern that would be the best shooting option. There was a slight unease as to who should be doing the shooting. Ronan had seen the mob of deer but I'd seen the stag and filmed it, confirming a shooter. **I sent two bullets down range and at least one connected, with the stag dropping out of sight.** The hinds ran straight towards us, and before they'd gone a hundred metres two young stags had broken from the bush and picked them up. I was half tempted to shoot a hind for a better stewing meat, but I'm very glad I didn't. Ronan made the comment that he was glad I'd shot it, as he wouldn't have to carry it out of there. How he would eat those words!



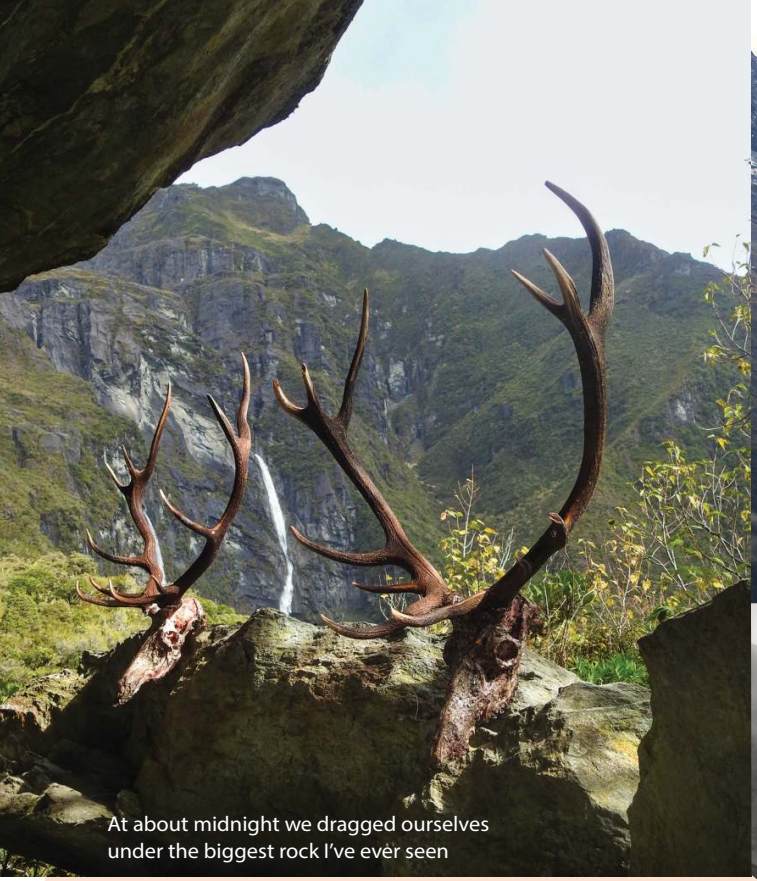


Two battlers with broken tines, I preferred the age and character of Ronan's head below, while he likened mine to the shape of many historic Otago trophies

As we took a couple of photos with the stag, a faint roar drifted over from the bush edge. Snapping the rifles back to attention revealed a heavy set of antlers, so Ronan lay on another extremely opportune crown fern (the only one within hundreds of metres) to pull off a cracking 400 yard shot in the last possible shooting light. We were in disbelief. I removed the head and some meat from my stag while Ronan confirmed his kill and dressed his stag. Two battlers with broken tines, I preferred the age and character of Ronan's head while he likened mine to the shape of many historic Otago trophies. We couldn't help but imagine these two stags fighting over the hinds with the conclusion being that mine was probably a year or so younger.

Maybe as a result of our eagerness, we'd left any form of GPS or compass back at the tent. As the light fell, we found ourselves nipples deep in the dark river trying to get around a fallen tree. Once back onto the terrace above the river, the exhaustion hit me all at once. I managed to get a tine in the eye, and after a couple of navigational debates, we stumbled into camp and collapsed into the tent. It was starting to become a trend.

The next day we upgraded the rutting stag meat with some Canadian goose breasts before setting off for a rock biv in the next catchment. We'd had a sleep-in but maybe it was deserved. Cutting every last scrap of weight out of the skulls, our bodies were screaming at us to rest. We broke camp at 11am with another dinner date set for the rock biv. We took a short interlude to eat noodles and roar



At about midnight we dragged ourselves under the biggest rock I've ever seen





It was dark by the time we got to the car park, as it had been on every day of this trip

in another young one-antlered stag on a flat in the middle of the day. Breaking from the scrub, we made the flat below the rock biv just as the sun set. Getting a rare glimpse at the map from Ronan, I declared half an hour and we'd be putting down the packs for the night.

The last 400 metres was deceptive, and in the rain and scrub we wriggled our way up. At around 11pm Ronan was running rings around me. My rifle was at the bottom of a pool in the river and the waterfalls had me done. Everything was cramping and I could have laid on the side of the river and given up for all I cared. He checked the map and excitedly declared a hundred metres left. Long pause. "One hundred metres." Longer pause. "I can do one hundred metres", I stammered. At about midnight we dragged ourselves under the biggest rock I've ever seen, only to find another human in his tent. He thought he was dreaming for half an hour. We stoked his fire, made our stew and got some much-needed rest.

As dawn broke we were all strangely eager to talk to someone new. Our friend was over from Aussie and had a bow. He'd come in via our planned exit route and it sounded a bit spicy, although the pass was ice-free. We'd dragged ice axes all this way only to dispatch 'possums! We set about teaching him to roar and giving him our horn before sending him down towards the action. Ronan produced some seasoning from a noodles packet and we marinated the goose breasts before frying them using the fat from the noodles. The goose, along with capsicum that had somehow survived the journey, and burger sauce in a wrap, provided the most amazing meal. We sat around reading aloud accounts of survival against all odds from the rock book, and Ronan proudly read his father's entry from a climbing trip decades earlier. We pulled out the maps and the cogs began to turn, planning trips to explore some of the alpine offerings in the area. One such description of a party coming in through thick scrub had us in hysterics. **"Greg winged and moaned while Anne put her head down and made bulldozer noises". That's going to stick.**

Texting on my InReach to convince our friend Kate to make a seven-hour round trip was going great until it died unexpectedly. I wasn't sure if the message had gone through and the Garmin wouldn't charge. We'd have to assume she got the message. Ronan worked his route-finding magic and the accounts of horrific scrub from our rock biv companion were avoided. As we hunkered under the smallest rock on the West Coast a chamois was spied. A hasty shot from Ronan secured a beautiful fatty stew to see us out to the car park the next night. We went to sleep content, despite being in a terrible campsite exposed on the snow grass face.

I'd hate to think of the smell when we busted into a hut for lunch, on the way down the east side of the Divide. **The lovely young ladies in residence did well to keep a brave face as we chopped the last of the chamois on the bench before frying up a wrap with the last of the cheese.** A quick spray and wipe and opening of the windows gave them some relief. I think they almost envied our wrap over their back country meals and packet salads. One was studying medicine and laughed at my attempt to tape Ronan's knee on day one. They were quite keen to rip the tape off, which Ronan was not having a bar of. We certainly appreciated their company.

As luck would have it, the InReach message had gone through. It was dark by the time we got to the car park, as it had been on every day of this trip. Kate arrived about 15 minutes after us, and had pink icing buns ready to go. Legend.

As I ran all the way to the Divide again the next day to grab the walking poles, it dawned on me that we had had quite the adventure. To call it a hunt would be misleading, for we had only done about three hours of hunting for some eight days of walking. **Chasing the footsteps of gold miners and big stags in remote wild places. Nothing better.**

Rab®



Available now from Rab specialist stores throughout NZ.

Hunting And Fishing New Zealand stores nationwide. Auckland: Living Simply, Tauranga: Hamills, Rotorua: Hamills, Taupo: Trev Marine, Waikato: Trek N Travel, Equip Outdoors, Otaki: Outdoors Unlimited, Wellington: Dwights Outdoors, Motueka: Coppins Outdoors, Nelson: PackGearGo, MD Outdoors, Kaikoura: Coastal Sports, Christchurch: Complete Outdoors, Greymouth: Colls Sports, Hokitika: Wild Outdoorsman, Wanaka: MT Outdoors, Queenstown: Small Planet. Online: huntingandfishing.co.nz, dwights.co.nz, outdooraction.co.nz, mtoutdoors.co.nz, smallplanetsports.com, equipoutdoors.co.nz, gearshop.co.nz, outfittersstore.nz

Distributed by Outfitters 0800021732 www.outfitters.co.nz

NZ HUNTER ADVENTURES

Rab is the clothing choice for NZ Hunter mountain adventures.

Watch NZ Hunter Adventures on Duke or on-demand at TVNZ

D tvnz on Demand



A WEST COAST DOUBLE

WRITTEN BY ~ DAVE GREIG

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THE WEST COAST FOR ME. I'M SURE I CAN SPEAK FOR PETE AND SAY THAT HE FEELS THE SAME. GROWING UP OVER THERE HAS GOT A BIT TO DO WITH IT

IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING, GUIDED BY HEADLAMPS, WE FOUND OURSELVES MOOCHING UP ANOTHER WEST COAST BUSH TRACK WITH LADEN PACKS. IT WAS MID-MARCH AND PETE HAD SUGGESTED A WALK-IN, PACKRAFT OUT TRIP UPRIVER FOR A QUICK OVERNIGHTER.



It wasn't a targeted trip as such but more a chance to catch up with Pete, who was now based in Wanaka, and an opportunity to tick up a few k's on the hoof to get in some pack fitness.

It was a bit early for roaring, but we knew there was still a chance of hearing the stags spark up here and there as they began to settle into their work for the rut. Furthermore, we knew there was a chance of a bull or a chamois buck mincing about down low, so we were quite happy to just take it as it came.

After a few hours of walking, daylight started to creep into the back of the clearings we were passing through, and the quiet bird song soon began to build. It's that magical time window that teaches you to start paying attention to things, as the chance of spotting a subtle movement or the vague silhouette of a grazing animal is more likely. Sure enough, as we angled around an awkward piece of clearing, Pete locked onto a young stag quartering away back towards the bushline. It was clear he was already aware of us as he stopped for a curious look before ducking his head into a tight opening of the bush and disappearing. It was a promising start considering the valley is not really known for Red deer.

A little further upriver, we dumped the packrafts and stashed them in the bush before carrying on with small daypacks. We headed directly into the bush, aiming for a terrace on the true right that seemed like a promising area for deer to be hiding.

The bush was patchy with some pockets of fern, which made for nice stalking and offered decent sightlines – until finding yourself in amongst crappy pockets of supplejack and windfall. Nevertheless, after a few searching moans, Pete was able to get a response through the bush up ahead.

After a brief standoff, going easy on the replies and focussing more on listening, we moved our way slightly into a pocket of bush with a good sightline towards the direction of the noise. A set of scrubby old antlers eventually came into view, and as they rocked back and forth dodging overhead vegetation, Pete had already raised and dropped his rifle, so I knew we weren't dealing with a shooter. The wind was favourable, and the stag remained really calm, offering up an awesome opportunity to snap off a few photos. He was running a small lid, but wasn't a young animal. We got a bunch of photos and soaked up another cool encounter before he slowly moved off into the thick bush.

We completed our bush terrace beat, then plodded downstream via a side creek to get our rafts and continued upstream to find a camp. Those plans were quickly overturned when I saw movement across the river which turned out to be a bull tahr grazing his way along the opposite side. Pete quickly set up and had a good look before deciding he was keen to take him.

There was no rush as the bull was happily feeding, the wind was good and the river noise allowed us to talk freely. Pete waited for him to turn broadside and tucked one into the crease of the front shoulder. **He reared up before dropping on the spot; a good stress-free outcome.**

It was now late afternoon so, after a bit of a chat the plan changed, and we headed back downstream to the rafts and floated across the river to collect the bull. We decided to throw the tent up in the bush and make camp there for the night. By the time we did all that, it put us at the bull just on dark. He was a cool-looking old bruiser with chipped ridges and a bit of character. No monster as far as the tape goes, but a pretty cool old set of horns to remind us of this trip.

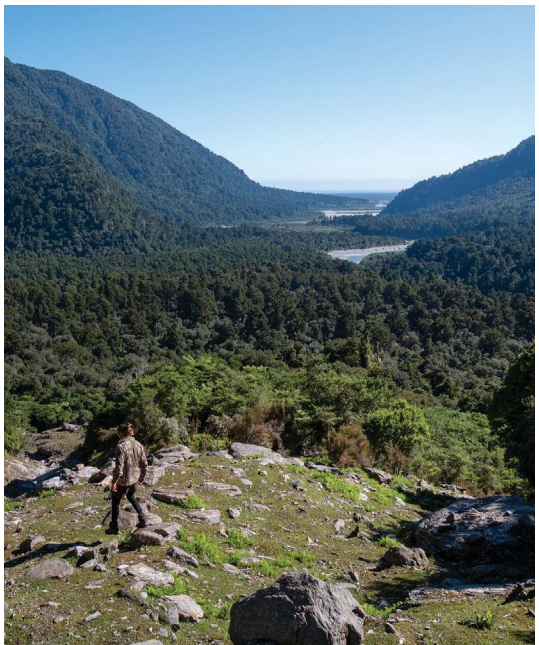
After a quick bit of butchery, we were off back to camp with a bit of meat for the frying pan. Parked up on the riverbank, Pete diced a backsteak up which was a fairly tough and gamey appetiser to ease us into the evening's dining experience, followed by the standard dehydrated meal and a brew to chase it down. The weather was warm and still as we turned in for the night.

We were up lacing boots on first light and making a few loose plans with how we were going to approach the day. It was all thick bush country around us, so we decided to follow our nose and string together a few likely-looking bits of country, hoping to stir up a bit of action. I sat in the pocket ten metres back from Pete

Reflections on a West Coast swamp



Pete and his riverbed bull



as he worked his way through the bush, concentrating more on him than anything else. Stopping when he stopped, carrying on when he did, watching for body language and the odd raised eyebrow as he noticed some tree rubbing or fresh bit of sign. Every step changed the view of what was around and the old senses were working overtime to keep up. For me, it's a pretty cool way to hunt, although it pays to know that there are decent numbers in the area to put the odds a bit more in your favour.

The morning produced several half-hearted roars from a few different stags that never really sounded keen on coming in for a look but would pipe up momentarily before leading off instead. A bit early maybe? Who knows, there's so many delicate variables at play when chasing the perfect recipe in the roar.

We punched up into the mid-band and sidled our way across the face before coming onto a nice grassy slip. The sign had been steady all day and the grassy slip was no exception, although this sign wasn't deer. As Pete angled his way up the clearing, he froze, looking upward. A gentle lean outward allowed me to see the young bull staring down at Pete. We were hoping that he may have another bull with him, but unfortunately there were only a few kids and nannies. The midday sun got up, which put an end to the morning's hunting. **Cruising our way back to camp we had a brew before packing up our gear and heading down to the river to inflate the rafts.**

With the packs, a bit of horn and beautifully tender old bull tahr meat strapped on the rafts, we took the mostly gentle ride out which put the full stop on another really punchy little trip to the Coast - or at least that was the initial plan.

Due to Pete having to get back to Wanaka on Sunday and me having Monday free, I decided to sneak up a valley further north on my way back to Christchurch, as Pete and I have had a bit of luck in this place a few years previously.

I ran a bit of a sloppy operation, getting there late at night, so decided to doss down in the truck. This was a bloody stupid idea as I had a rubbish kip and woke up very dusty early the next morning.

Nevertheless, I laced the boots and stumbled my way up the river. The fresh river crossing woke me up and, from then on, I was a bit more focussed on the





Gourmet bull tahr steaks



Pete and Dave with the rafts

job. I decided to take a side creek up onto a bushy terrace and follow my nose up through country where we had previously shot a decent stag. Straight off the bat, things were promising, with plenty of sign and that unmistakable smell of a pizzled-up stag wafting its way around the place. **I played the slow game as it seemed old mate could be close by.**

I took a couple of painfully slow steps up the bush ridge while watching ahead as I went, followed by a pause, then onwards. Rinse and repeat. After a while, I reached a nice little vantage point and decided to sit down and let out a wee moan. I stayed put, not really moving for a good 15 minutes, trying to tune in on everything. I then slowly stood and moved no more than half a dozen steps before I got my reply - a low half-hearted moan that was very close. I froze, trying to figure out the direction. I was sitting on the bush ridge with the fronds of a king fern at eye level from a tree just off the side of the ridge below me. I slowly dipped off and put myself under the fronds, then kneeled to gain cover and change the angle a bit. A few minutes passed, and after scanning what was in sight several times, I finally picked up a big red shoulder sitting no more than 15 yards ahead, and surprisingly difficult to spot. I was moving painfully slowly and had the cover as well as old mate's head behind some scrubby bush.

I snuck the rifle up and found the shoulder of the stag through the scope. Moving the crosshairs slowly up to the head I saw a set of peepers locked on me. A gentle scan up one side of his antlers, followed by the other side, told me everything I needed to know. Back down to the shoulder I went before squeezing the trigger. A flurry of legs emerged under the ferns, and then a crash into the tight bush off to the side confirmed that he must have been holding hinds.

You can work your backside off and come home empty-handed, so it's always nice to have the rub of the green every now and then. I skipped over there to find quite a heavy 12. I was chuffed that he gave me that window to get a good look at him, as that's pretty bloody rare when hunting in West Coast bush.

The cup was certainly full, whipping back over the Main Divide with a West Coast double between us, and another busy shift to replay in the memory banks.



The young bull tahr that popped up in front of Pete



A heavy 12 pointer, a nice win

ULTIMATE PROTECTION FOR YOUR 4X4

IRONMAN 4 X 4

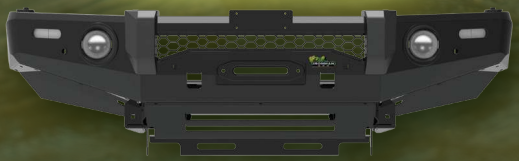
The Raid Series Front Bull Bar delivers a sleek yet powerful design, with strong steel construction and a textured powdercoated finish for durability



RAID SERIES
FROM $2999



PREMIUM DELUXE
FROM $2989



PROGUARD NO LOOP
FROM $2598

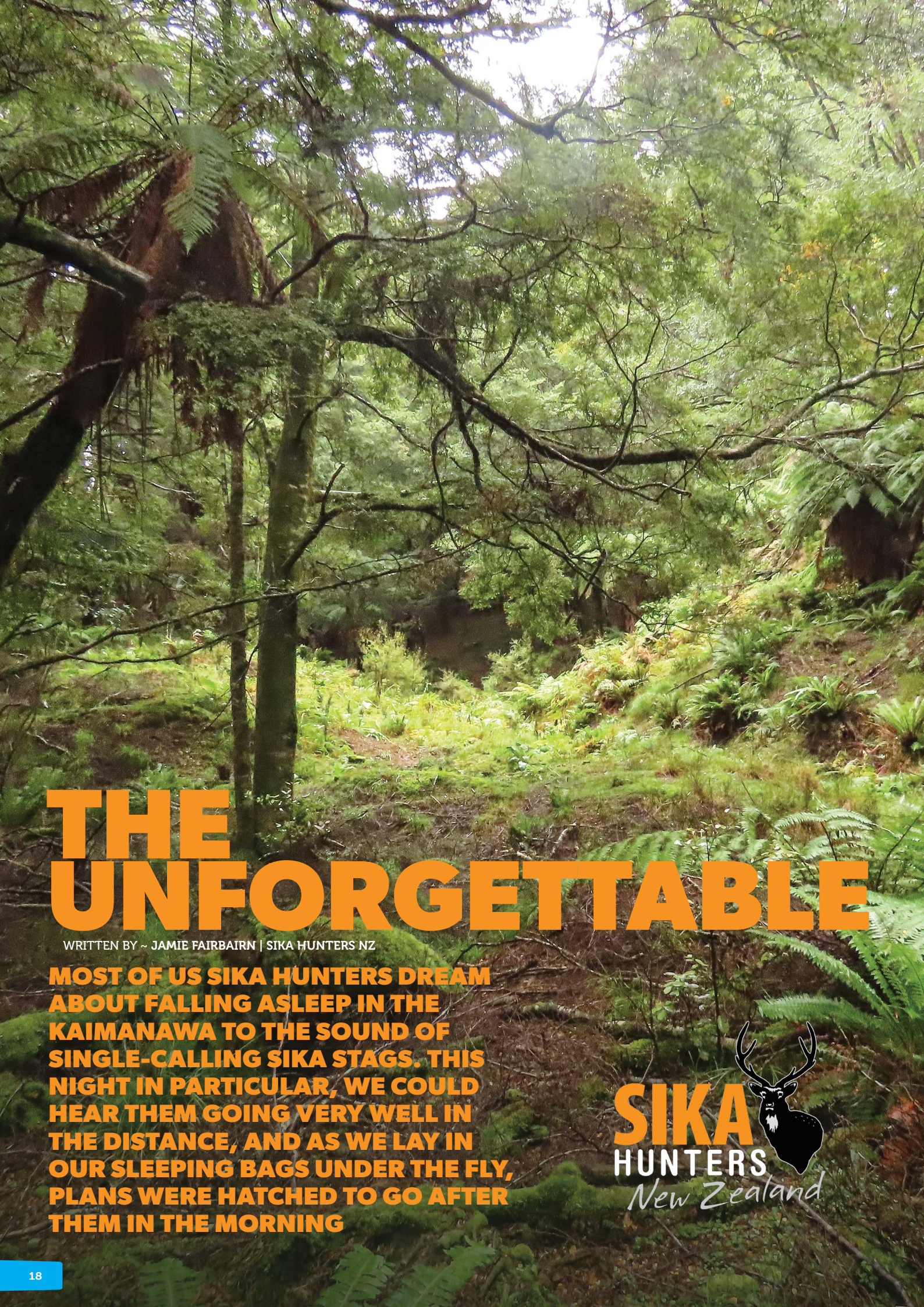


COMMERCIAL DELUXE
FROM $2649

Keep you and your family protected with Ironman 4x4. Bull bars are one of the first accessories to be added to any 4×4, improving your approach angle, protecting your vehicle from animal strikes when driving on remote roads, and provide convenient locations to mount other 4×4 accessories such as winches, lights and aerials. An Ironman 4x4 bull bar should be one of the first additions to your vehicle.

WWW.IRONMAN4X4.CO.NZ | 0508 IRONMAN (0508 476 6626)


HUNTERS ELEMENT
EXPLORE FURTHER | HUNT LONGER
VANTAGE HOODIE
BASE LAYER
BINO DEFENDER SYSTEM
ARETE INTERCHANGEABLE PACK SYSTEM
ECLIPSE PANTS
BASE LAYER
GEAR UP FOR THE ROAR
SEE THE RANGE AT HUNTERSELEMENT.CO.NZ



THE UNFORGETTABLE

WRITTEN BY ~ JAMIE FAIRBAIRN | SIKA HUNTERS NZ

MOST OF US SIKA HUNTERS DREAM ABOUT FALLING ASLEEP IN THE KAIMANAWA TO THE SOUND OF SINGLE-CALLING SIKA STAGS. THIS NIGHT IN PARTICULAR, WE COULD HEAR THEM GOING VERY WELL IN THE DISTANCE, AND AS WE LAY IN OUR SLEEPING BAGS UNDER THE FLY, PLANS WERE HATCHED TO GO AFTER THEM IN THE MORNING

SIKA HUNTERS New Zealand



Awesome bush to be chasing Sika stags in

It was the Sika rut 2023, mid April to be exact, and Jed and I had made plans a while back to chase roaring Sika stags together.

It was the third night of our trip, and as we lay in our bags listening to the chorus of Sika stags roaring their hearts out, we chatted about the great times we had spent chasing them in the roars gone by.

Jed and I have been hunting Sika together for more than twenty years, and as Jed now lives five hours drive from me, it was great to be on a hunt together for the next week. Unbeknownst to us, the next few days would be one for the memory bank.

Dawn broke the next morning, and we were already 20 minutes from camp. We had planned to check out some of the benches and rolling country near where we had heard the stags roaring the night before, and then see what happened from there. The stags had gone quiet, but the bush was fairly good under foot, making for easy stalking.

During our morning hunt in the mature beech forest, we encountered several signs such as scrapes and numerous prints indicating the presence of stags. **Although we initially thought we were in the right area as we had heard their roars the night before, it seemed like they had already moved on.** All we caught glimpsed that morning was a hind and yearling departing at a rate of knots. It was quiet, with only the odd territory call in the distance breaking the silence.

By early afternoon, we were on a familiar open ridge, with mānuka scattered in patches on the sides. With the slight breeze in our face, we slowly picked our way down, stopping every 50 metres to let out a mew or single call. We were trying our luck to see if we could get a stag to reply or make one ghost in for a look as they do. With no luck and the ridge being super dry underfoot, we decided to drop the boots off, tie them to our packs and stalk in socks the rest of the way. We find this method gives us more of an advantage, and anything you can do you gain a slight advantage is surely going to be a benefit. Hunting in socks is awesome for bush stalking and a very effective way to hunt in summer as well.

Towards the end of the ridge, we came up to a game camera that I had set a month back. As I took my day bag off to check it, we heard a faint single call from what seemed to be about 300 metres away down the ridge. I looked at Jed and, with hand signals, we agreed to move over toward a drop off on the edge of the mānuka and listen, as it was mid-afternoon and this stag might just have just started up.

We sat one metre apart so we could still communicate well and listened for the next 30 minutes in dead silence. With two and a half hours of daylight left we knew if he roared again, we would have a chance of sneaking in on him before dark.

Out to my left, I heard what sounded like a quiet mew from a stag, but as I was not sure I looked at Jed. He was facing me by now and had heard the noise too, but shrugged his shoulders as he was also not sure; maybe it was a bird? One minute later, we heard it again; it was one hundred per cent a Sika stag mew, and he was moving closer. As we already had ourselves in a good position, sitting leaning against trees to break our silhouette and rifles at the ready, I let out a quiet mew facing away



A big gnarly Beech



One of the biggest bodied Sika stags I have ever seen, with super long antlers both antlers measuring over 30 inches long; a very cool mature stag indeed



The same stag captured on the trail camera



from the stag to make him think we were further away.

He replied instantly with a loud and long mew only 30-40 metres distant. I looked at Jed and knew instantly he was as pumped as I was to have a stag close by. Man, he was making some noise; this is what we were here for, right? **Over the next five minutes, I mewed at the stag, and he answered immediately every time, slowly getting closer.** I whispered to Jed that he must be following a hind and that's why he was staying put and not racing in to check out the intruder. Not long after Jed saw a deer; he could see the hind feeding slowing through the mānuka out in front of us and slightly to the left, then he saw the stag! He looked through his scope but could only see parts of the antler and his arse at times, so lowered his rifle again, waiting for him to present a shot.

The wind was still in our face, and with the drop-off two metres behind us, the only way he could come to us was across the front of us - or so we thought. I kept mewing every few minutes and he immediately answered back every time. Slowly he came closer, and was starting to show a bit of anger in his replies.

I gave one more mew facing away, and he replied out to my hard left. He was 15 metres away on the edge of the bank and he was coming! I could see length and one big top as he pushed through the scrub, then paused to look around. He was mostly obscured by the thick mānuka, but I managed to get a bead on the base of his neck and fired a 150g Core-Lokt at him. "You sacked him mate," Jed said as I dropped the empty casing out of my 308. We waited a minute or so just in case he got up, but he was going nowhere. Walking over to where he was lying, we could tell he was a big animal. At our feet was one of the biggest bodied Sika stags I had ever seen, with super long antlers both antlers measuring over 30 inches long; a very cool mature stag indeed.

We shook hands and proceeded to take a fair few photos before hanging him up for collection the next day, as by now, it was starting to get dark. With the light fading we made the hour-long trip back to camp for some long-awaited hot food and the comfort of our sleeping bags.

The next way was rather uneventful with little roaring heard around us. We headed back to recover the meat from the stag we shot the previous evening, and man, was he fat; it was everywhere while boning him out. We had a good load of venison back to camp along with the head skin; he had a very nice thick and gingery cape.

That night, the stags started up again and they were in full force; we could hear they had moved a bit more north and further away. For the second night, as we retired into our sleeping bags, the sound of roaring Sika stags rocked us to sleep. Getting up for piss at 5am, I could still hear the stags so the billy was put on while we got out of the scratcher and gathered our gear for a daylight raid on them. Leaving our fly camp as the first light broke, we could see the day was going to be overcast with



The trail camera strikes again



Big tops, eight nice points - a very nice Sika stag





A fungi I met in the hills...

light drizzle as we cut the distance toward the stags; perfect stalking conditions.

The stags seemed to be moving away from us during the time it took to get in range. We could hear two prominent single-calling stags and the odd lesser one making noise on the outskirts. **We snuck in slowly once we caught up to them, making every metre count like it was the last, scanning the area in front of us for any other deer that would bust the intruders sneaking in.** The stags were going as good as you will ever get, single calling over top of each other and making a right time of it. We parked up on the edge of a more open area and had one stag calling directly in front of us at 40 metres and the other slightly to the right at the same distance. I told Jed that we should move towards the right and approach the right-hand stag. Since the wind was blowing from the left, we could use it to our advantage and try to catch a glimpse of the right-hand stag. We moved in, one calculated step at a time, navigating around a few trees downed in the cyclone, and crossed a small gully. Upon exiting the other side Jed said "don't move, I can see a stag coming". I froze on the spot as I couldn't see him; five seconds later a long young six-pointer came face to face with us as we stood motionless. He looked at us for a while, and we hoped he wouldn't squeal and let everyone know the raiding party was close by. Luckily, he slipped away not making a sound. During that time, the two main stags were still going for it. We crept onto a small spur and parked up behind a fallen tree.

One of the stags was in front, just out of sight in a small depression, single calling and mewing while he moved back and forth. I caught a glimpse of the stag's tops and said to Jed "he is a good one, mate". It was Jed's shot, so we set him up with a good view from behind the fallen tree, but the stag was still playing hard to get due to the angle. **We mewed at him and he would single call back to us every time while as he marched around his little area.** There were no other animals to be seen and we didn't know why he wouldn't come out to give us a look, ideally at his shoulder or neck.

I decided to move back 15-20 metres and mew facing away as if to make it sound like I had moved back. Hopefully, he would think I was leaving and come out of his hiding spot and step into view for Jed.

Sneaking back, but staying in view of Jed up the hill in front of me, I let out a mew. He answered, but it sounded as though he was still in the same spot. I waited a few minutes, then gave another mew and bugger me, if he didn't step out from behind a tree 15 metres from me. I looked at Jed and he was still looking to where the stag had been a few minutes ago, so knowing he couldn't see the stag and the stag was staring straight at me, I lifted my 308 and fired into the stag's shoulder, dropping him on the spot.

Feeling bad that I had shot Jed's stag I explained what had happened. He understood and said that he definitely couldn't see him, and we both agreed he would have taken off if I hadn't taken the shot. Walking up to him I could see he had big tops, eight nice points and was a very nice Sika stag. It had been an exhilarating hunt with some of the best Sika roaring I had encountered in my 25 years chasing the little buggers. This stag was smaller than the first one body-wise but in great condition overall and full of the classic Sika spots on his coat. Another photo session was undertaken, we then took the head off and hung him for collection a couple days later.

Getting back to camp we cracked the beers we had been saving and enjoyed the evening with a small fire roaring to cook our dinner. The next few days were fairly windy while we searched the beech forest and mānuka edges in search of a stag for Jed. We managed to get in close to two more roaring stags, but they went quiet on us, so we came up short on sealing the deal. All in all, our 2023 Sika rut was a warm and windy one with the stags roaring well for us on the limited days we had to attack them. **We came away with two mature stags and felt very lucky to have found some good roaring action. Bring on 2024; Surely it's Jed's turn this year?**



SIKA HUNTERS New Zealand

SIKA TIPS

WRITTEN BY ~ JAMIE FAIRBAIRN | SIKA HUNTERS NZ

1. **When roaring a Sika stag, make sure you are one hundred percent ready before you let out a roar.** I sit down or kneel behind a tree so my silhouette's broken up. I have everything I need ready including game caller and rifle while I sit motionless only moving my eyes. Sika stags are very good at picking up on movement and any unnecessary movement could catch their eye and you could lose that vital second you need to take him down.

2. **Take note of what's in your area**. Sometimes it is not possible to know an area before you hunt it but the more preparation and knowledge of your area the more advantage you will have. Taking note of hind numbers and where you see them most, where wallows were last year, where there are lots of stag rubs and scratch pads. These all help gain knowledge for the roar. Trail/Game cameras are vital.

3. **Try not to over-roar a Sika stag.** I will single call to get one started but if he is calling I move in super slow, not letting them know I'm there. If he needs to come to you, try low mews to bring him out. I have covered how to roar Sika stags well on our website so please check it out.

4. **If you see hinds in the bush, be ready for the stag to be following.** If you are parked up and a couple Sika come past, check if a stag is tailing them pushing them along. This has worked for me a few times.

5. **When you hear a stag territory call, he will most likely call again within the next 30min.** Head his way and wait for the next call to pin point him. If you hear quite a few territory calls in one spot head over as there is a chance they are single calling and the closer you get might help you hear the single calls.

6. **Lastly, remember we have waited all year for the roar and we only have so many roars in a lifetime.** Try your best when you are there and you will achieve results over time, don't waste April. You can run into stags anywhere as they move all April in search for hinds so be ready all throughout the day and even on the way back to camp. I decide before the roar what my plan is in regards to what I am going to shoot if I get given the chance. Most times my aim is to roar in a mature Sika stag in the bush and hopefully he has a good set of antlers on top. By doing this I am assessing him on the hoof and he needs to be mature and have good long anthers rather than just 'a stag'. This helps me identify my target beyond all doubt. Aim small miss small. Please be safe out there this roar and best of luck.

SIKA HUNTERS NEW ZEALAND







UNIVERSAL GAME CALLER

Deluxe MKII

Designed in New Zealand by hunters for hunting



BE MORE SUCCESSFUL with an A J Productions Electronic Game Caller (AJ Caller)

The best electronic game caller for New Zealand hunting!!

Available sound cards:
Red deer; Red deer 2; Sika deer; Sika deer 2; Sika deer 3; NEW Sika deer 4; Fallow deer; NZ Pest; (features a Magpie call); Feral goat; Fallow Deer; Mallard duck; Fiordland Wapiti); Sambar/ Fallow combo; Feral pig; Turkey, plus more.
Check out our website for other available sound cards.

Volume Output:
120+ decibels
Twin sound card slots
Large Speaker:
75mm

Deluxe MKII version requires new sound cards with BLUE sticker labels

DELUXE MKII FEATURES NEW RE-DESIGNED ELECTRONICS

SOUND CARDS FOR THE AJ CALLER



Trail Cameras

PRICES START FROM $289.00

We have 9 models available from two different manufacturers and have a trail/security camera to suit everyone's needs. New Zealand's only authorised distributor for Browning & UOVision cameras.

Browning Spec Ops Elite HP5

Perfect camera for surveillance or for monitoring game animals.



The Spec Ops Elite HP5 features high quality 24 MP pictures. The invisible (Black Flash), adjustable power "Night Vision" IR illumination reaches out to 100 ft., thanks to new RADIANT 5 Night Illumination Technology. The Spec Ops Elite HP5 camera also features an incredible 1920 x 1080 Full HD video processor, capable of producing stunning video footage @ 60 frames per second. Additional features include a 2"colour viewing screen, super quick 0.1-0.7 adjustable trigger speed.

BROWNING

UOVision Select 30 - 4G LTE "CLOUD"

NEW – Open Sim Version.
Simply put in an activated Sim card with data credit on it, and all is good to go.



30MP 4G LTE Cellular trail/security camera. Takes photos and records video with sound. Record up to 4K Video footage but in cellular model, can only send short video clips in 1080p, 720p or WVGA quality via the cellular network.
Invisible "Black Flash" leds for night-time recording. Easy Setup via the LinckEazi Web-Portal and the LinckEazi Mobile App. Cameras features fast 0.2 sec trigger speed, multi shot photo burst, password protect, selectable Start-Stop operating period or the default 24/7 operating period, long range detection plus much more. Camera works on Spark, Vodafone and 2-degrees networks.

UOVision

Backed up with superior craftsmanship - WE SERVICE ALL OUR OWN PRODUCTS!

AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD **SPORTS, OUTDOOR STORES** OR **GO TO OUR WEBSITE**

A J Productions Ltd is New Zealand's exclusive distributor for Browning & UOVision Cameras plus the Miltronics Wireless Driveway Detection Systems

a.j.productions@actrix.co.nz | Phone 07 847 0124 | www.ajproductions.co.nz

INTRIGUE02422-01/24



HARD LUCK STORIES

WRITTEN BY ~ **ADAM ROSS**

The public conservation land adjacent to the easement. Country known for producing some big heads in years gone by

The Roar of 2023 will go down in the memory banks as a series of hard luck stories

The first happened in the last week of March. I was hunting some tenure review country in Canterbury. That's Public Conservation Land (DOC land) previously leased for grazing and which has since been returned to the Crown.

I walked up an easement, gaining about 1000 vertical metres in the process, and ended up camping on a ridge which marked the boundary of the PCL and private land. It's worth noting that this boundary is marked only by the remnants of the old high-country fence, dilapidated to the point where a lazy merino wouldn't even acknowledge its existence. **The sheep have long gone from this country but the deer move freely across the boundary.**

I had every intention of hunting the public land but couldn't help noticing a stag answering my roars over on the private side. Not thinking much of it, I started glassing and picked up what seemed to be a solid stag cresting a spur about a kilometre away. The spotting scope revealed a very special deer, 17 solid points with good weight and length. A pleasure to see but still very much off limits.

The stag was fired up, roaring and wallowing on the face opposite. I kept roaring, focusing on my side but thoroughly enjoying the regular replies coming over my shoulder. The stag was generally moving my direction and my roars seemed to be pulling him closer. He carried on along a well-trodden game trail, eventually disappearing out of sight into the gully between us.

Three quartes of an hour later with only a spiker on the public side, I spun around to see if the big stag was back in view. As soon as the binoculars came up, I saw a big red bulk move through the matagouri below me. **At only 500 yards it hit me that I could get an opportunity at this stag, if I could only get him over to my side of the boundary.**

The stag sidled away from me, heading upstream. I knew of a thoroughfare through a saddle further up the ridge, which would give me the best opportunity to pull him up and over the boundary, but it was still a long shot. The stag would have to gain 400 metres of elevation and walk away from a handful of hinds in the valley below. Full of optimism, I ran up the ridge and set up on the edge of the saddle as the sun disappeared behind the ridge.

Just as I settled in, a spiker that seemed to be moving with the stag came over a spur below me. I let out a roar and looked down to see the big stag come over the same spur, now at only 350 yards. I was hard on the boundary, using Maptoaster on my phone to keep me honest and all I could do was keep roaring.

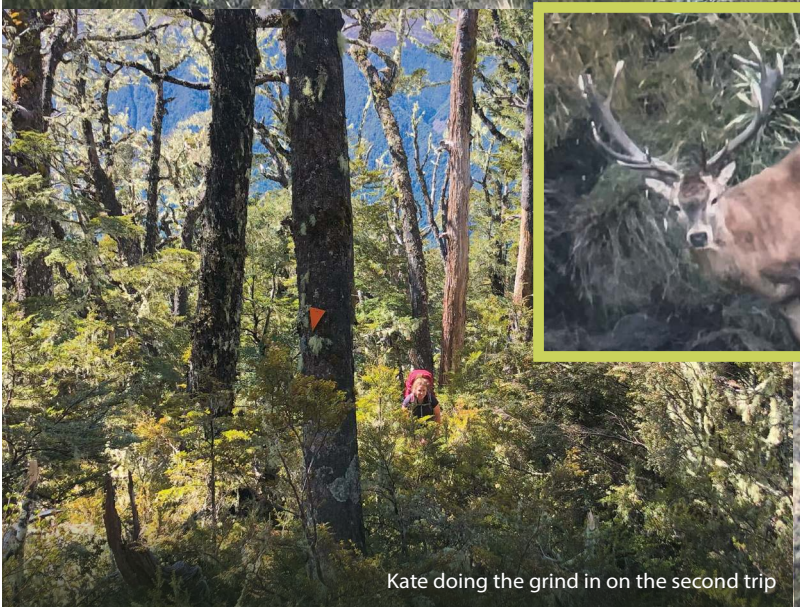
The stag was clearly fired up with deep, guttural tails at the end of his roars. He and the spiker got incrementally closer as the hills got darker. I was just about hoarse from roaring when I ranged the stag broadside at 220 yards in the wide open. Still 220 yards on the wrong side of the boundary. At this point he stopped and did not want to come any closer, although still replying to every roar I made. I started shaking bushes and smashing the roaring horn into the Dracophyllum to try and entice that wee bit more. This kept him roaring, but he wouldn't budge.

In the process of getting a 17 pointer into my zero range, I forgot somewhat about the spiker that was with him. The spiker was slightly higher than the stag









Kate doing the grind in on the second trip





The 17 pointer through the spotter



Gut bags from the summer

and must have caught some movement in the half-light he didn't like. I cursed every spiker in existence as its bark echoed through the saddle. That was the final straw and the stag remained fixed where he was. After another ten minutes of roaring back and forth I could only just make out the stag through the binoculars and had to concede defeat by the darkness. **I slowly roared my way away feigning retreat. In the morning, the stag was back where I first saw him, half asleep and letting out the occasional moan from his bed.** It was clear he wasn't in the mood and I carried on into the heart of the public land I intended to hunt. Other than a pile of gut bags I saw nothing of note for the next three days.

The next part is a bit waffly, so strap in. The temptation to shoot the stag over the boundary was obviously there. I was miles away from anywhere and the chances of getting caught were almost non-existent. Legality aside, there was a hunting ethics question I found more important If I had shot the stag, I would always regret it and never be completely proud of the antlers. I believe that stag deserves better than that. If that animal had gone 220 yards to the west, I would likely have a taxidermy bill on my hands. It seems mad, but these are the ethical boundaries I've set and will stick to. He's still out there breeding, and I had an awesome experience. **I'm happy with the decision and can take that one on the chin. If anything, the second hard luck story hurts a little bit more.**

Fast forward a week to Easter, and mates Troy, Ryan, my partner Kate, Bailey the GSP/Lab and I are sitting and watching a bush edge in a different public land spot. Troy and Ryan had caught a glimpse of a good stag in the fog the day before and we were waiting to see what came out. We didn't see any mature stags that morning but could hear several roaring in bush below. After a long day of glassing Troy and I got itchy feet and decided to check out another basin, leaving Ryan and Kate to watch the bush edge. We had three rifles, two 7mm-08 which are set up for 500 yards comfortably and a 25-06 with a 3-9 scope. Regrettably, we took the two long-range guns with us without thinking. We roared in a small stag but saw nothing to get excited about.

Ryan and Kate on the other hand had a ripper 14-pointer walk out in front of them. They tried to close the gap but couldn't get within comfortable range for that rifle. All credit to Ryan for not taking a marginal pot shot here. They got some photos for Troy and I to drool over that night and we made a plan to be in a position first thing in the morning.

Overnight the weather changed. The wind picked up and the deer seemed to retreat to the relative comfort of the bush. The big stag was nowhere to be seen. We stuck it out all day, retreating to the tents for a short time to sit out a rather intense rain and lightning storm. We waited until the evening, but again the stag didn't show. Late Easter Monday night saw us battling a nor'west gale to get back to the car well after dark.

The others had commitments, but I was able to get back in there first thing the following Saturday morning. By morning teatime, I was almost up at the lookout point. My stomach dropped when I saw the silhouettes of two other guys on the knob I planned to sit on. After a quick discussion and some porkies from both sides, it turned out they had seen the same stag in the same spot earlier that morning and had a long shot under some challenging conditions. They were confident of a clean miss and were hoping he would come out later that evening.

They were now well-versed in the pain I was feeling and were good enough to suggest I hunt with them for the day. It was an offer I couldn't refuse and one I am still grateful for.

We waited out the day and were ready and watching when the shadows started to lengthen. A few deer began to emerge from the bush edge but I think we were all sceptical of the big old stag ever showing himself again. However, with about 30 minutes of light left, I watched a big bodied, heavy antlered stag chase a hind out of the bush. **A quick look with the spotter confirmed it was the big 14-pointer back out, as it if were a normal day.**

We took off in that direction with the light fading fast. A small knob between us gave an ideal shooting position. We







Images that Kate and Ryan got when they first found the 14 pointer

agreed that with the miss earlier, one rifle was sidelined until it was checked. The other guy would have the first shot and I would be there as a backup. We both settled in on the stag at just on 400 yards. In the fading light, two shots rang out, mine slightly after the first. The stag turned and started running towards us. I worked the bolt and quickly squeezed off a second shot as the stag stopped. **He kept running towards us and stopped again. I let the last round in the magazine go and he turned and ran straight downhill into a patch of scrub.**

Grabbing a spare round from my bino harness I reloaded and dialled the scope down to 350 yards. We had all lost sight but after some frantic searching, I managed to pick him up through the scrub, very wobbly but still on his feet. He took a couple of steps and then rolled over, which is usually a good sign, until he stood back up and ran another 20 metres. At this point he stopped, and I was able to deliver the coup de grâce.

We were all stoked to have the stag on the deck, but it did raise the question as to whose stag it was. We found him with little drama and after some photos, began the autopsy.

The stag had a clear wound in his neck, obviously the final shot. There was also a bullet hole clean through his right antler. I was fairly confident that was mine, made in the panic of him still on his feet. We never found another entry or exit, but we dug deep enough to find some trauma in his lungs. After a lot (and I mean a lot) of humming and ha-ring, we decided that the most likely case was that he was hit on the first shot and was dead on his feet. This meant he was going home with the other guy.

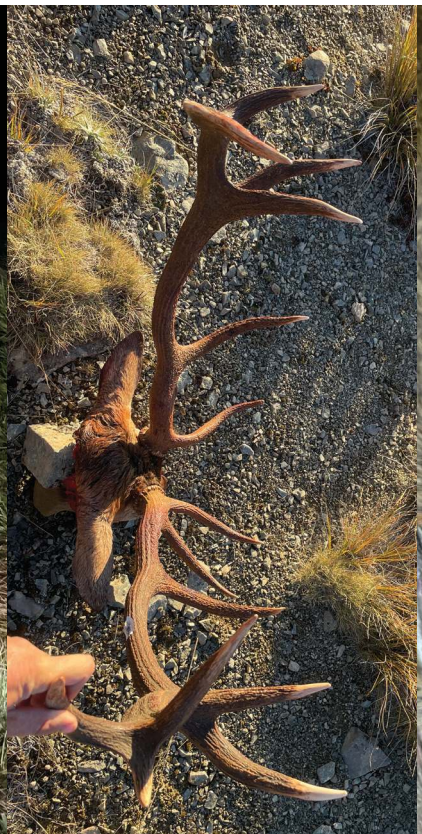
Anyone who hunts public land seriously will know how rarely deer like that come along and can imagine the feeling I had watching the antlers walk away on another guy's pack.

Like the 17-pointer, I was happy enough with the experience and have the photos to remember it by.

This year's roar has been a big case of the emotional roller coaster. **I can't truthfully say that I loved every minute, but I can say that it's ample motivation to keep chasing those big public land stags.**



An exceptional head for the area





Unfortunately I managed to put a hole in an antler as he ran back towards us – character



KROSEG
PRECISION



WWW.KROSEGPRECISION.COM

THE NEW STANDARD IN CARBON FIBRE RIFLE STOCKS.

Stocks designed for the hunter or competitive shooter that want a lightweight, yet rigid, platform!

Made in NZ - each stock is hand laminated with prepreg carbon, including structural layers of unidirectional carbon running the length of the stock, dramatically stiffening the construction. All stocks are laid up inside CNC cut aluminium moulds and cured at high temperatures to ensure quality and consistency.

We use two different types of fill inside each stock. A lightweight closed cell in the forend and butt, and a structural closed cell in the action bedding area. Using a closed cell fill is extremely important to stop oils and other moisture getting in. The choice to use two different fills ensures that we manufacture a product with optimised weight characteristics without sacrificing strength.

Each stock comes with a microcell recoil pad as well as your choice of flush cups or sling studs. We can fit a bipod picatinny rail or Spartan mounts by request. We also offer a range of functional paint options, accompanied with a soft touch coating.

New Zealand-Made Ultralight Innovation

KIWI ULTRALIGHT



SCAN ME

Ultralight Tarps and Bug Bivys Now Available!

Check out the full range of ultralight products @ KiwiUltralight.co.nz



WRITTEN BY ~ GREG DULEY

THE ULTIMATE, ALL-ROUND NZ HUNTING CARTRIDGE

IS IT THE NEW 7MM PRC?

Most of our readers will be aware I think the 7mm is the sweet spot for a mountain hunting rifle between the light recoiling but accurate 6.5s and smaller, and the punishing in front and behind 30 cals and bigger

The 7mms have the highest BC projectiles available able to be pushed at good velocity without the recoil becoming unmanageable in a lightweight rifle. Various 7mms have been the most popular standard and magnum chamberings in new rifles sold for many years – specifically the 7mm-08 and the 7mm Rem Magnum

The 270 is also making a bit of a resurgence now that there are some great projectile choices available in .277", but its only 7 thousandths of an inch smaller than .284 anyway so is really an honorary 7mm. The 308 is popular in bush rifles but can't compete ballistically with the 7mms, and the bigger 30 cals shooting the heaviest projectiles that can compete have a pretty significant recoil penalty that proves too much for many.

THE CARTRIGE

So 7mm is the bullet diameter, but then there are many case capacity options you can choose behind that bullet depending on your velocity requirements, and they largely depend on the ranges you want to be able to accurately shoot to. I have said this repeatedly, if you have the ability to consistently and humanely take animals at 500 to 600yds, you increase your hunting opportunities immensely. And this is very achievable with modern equipment if you are prepared to put the time into learning how to use it properly. Let's take two of my all-time favourite hunting projectiles – the Hornady 175gn ELD-X and the Berger 180gn Hybrid. Take the most common smaller 7mm with 55 grains of water capacity to overflow/top of the case, the 7mm-08. Its only capable of about 2450 to 2500fps with these projectiles if loaded up to around 65,000psi out of the standard 22 inch barrel, which is a bit more than its 61,000psi SAAMI pressure spec. This just isn't fast enough to make the 7mm-08 a serious long range contender. Its best with 120gn monolithics like the Barnes TTSX or 140gn conventional lead core bullets in the 2800 to 3000fps velocity bracket at ranges out to 400 yards maximum.

And so we step up in capacity to 68gns of water 280 Remington, 284 Winchester and similar. Now these are starting to hold enough powder to produce satisfactory velocity with reasonable BC projectiles – again at 65,000psi approaching 3000fps with the 150gners, 2900fps with the 160s and 2800fps with the 175s. This is in the standard factory barrel length for the 280 which is 22 inches. Great cartridge though it is, you'll find very few rifles chambered in it these days. **The 280 AI improved version with its 74gn water capacity is more common and chambered in things like the lightweight Kimber Mountain Ascent.** The very similar capacity 7mm SAUM is popular

with custom rifle builders but not chambered in many factory rifles any more. Both of these are capable of about 2900fps with the 175gners out of a 24 inch barrel, which is standard in the Kimbers. Next we have the most popular internationally, 7mm cartridge of all time – the 7mm Remington Magnum – and the short/fat 7mm WSM and 7mm Blaser – all with about 82gns of water capacity. These will do 3000+fps with the 175s out of a 24 inch barrel. **This is a very good velocity with a very good projectile that easily qualifies as a 600 yard mountain hunting load.** Stepping up again we have the 28 Nosler with 97gns of water and the 7mm RUM with 112gns. The Nosler is the most popular of the big 7mms, as the 7mm RUM is slowly disappearing – seriously good long range cartridge though it is. The Nosler will push the 175gners up to 3200fps, whereas the RUM gets closer to 3300fps. These two are more than capable of pushing the highest BC 7mm projectiles available – the 190gn Hornady A-Tip (.417G7 BC) and the 195gn Berger EOL(.380G7 BC) – at seriously impressive velocities well over 3100fps.

There are a few more assorted 7mm factory cartridges and a whole bunch of wildcats of lesser popularity scattered along the capacity continuum. The most relevant one to the latest cartridge design is the 7mm Blaser. Designed by Christer Larsen, chief ballistician at Norma, the Blaser is effectively the same capacity as the 7mm Rem Mag, but has a bunch of other things going for it which we'll get to shortly.



7mm Cartridge line up in similar capacity clusters - 7mm-08; 284, 280; 280 Al, 7mm SAUM; 7mm WSM, 7mm PRC, 7mm Blaser, 7mm Rem Mag; 28 Nosler; 7mm RUM



The red arrows show the tenon diameter, the green arrow is the chamber wall thickness that results from that diameter and this has a large effect on ease of case extraction

THE RIFLE

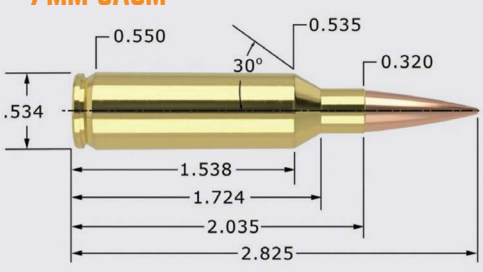
Now, you can't choose a cartridge without considering the rifle – not every cartridge will work well in every rifle. There are long actions and short actions, fat actions and skinny actions. **Simply, if you choose a long cartridge, you'll need a long action rifle.** If you choose a fat cartridge like any of the WSMs, SAUMs, Blasers, Noslers and RUMs etc that are based on the 404 Jeffery's .540" head diameter, you need a fat action with ideally a 1.062" diameter barrel tenon or bigger, or you'll get sticky extraction before you reach 65,000psi pressures. Remingtons, Savages and most US manufactured custom actions have this tenon diameter, and some are available in both long and short actions. While a short action sounds like a good idea, its not usually possible to get these longer high BC projectiles seated out anywhere near the lands where they shoot best and still fit in the magazine of a factory short action without serious modification. You normally have to seat them way down into the powder column which robs both accuracy and velocity. Sako is the only manufacturer who makes 5 different action lengths and diameters, and therefore tailored to suit specific cartridges the best.

The most popular hunting rifle in NZ is the Tikka T3. This is a medium or standard length action with a 3.375" maximum magazine length and a 1 inch barrel tenon, so its not ideally suited for either the long or the fattest cartridges. It is chambered in the 7mm Rem Mag and the 300 Win Mag, but you do have to seat your projectiles well below the neck/shoulder junction and jump your projectiles a long way if you want them to fit in the magazine. Diameter wise these two are fine, as while they have a .532" rim diameter, they step down just ahead of the belt to a .513" case body diameter which is the bit inside the barrel tenon that can cause sticky extraction issues. The WSMs .555" body diameter definitely limits achievable velocity when trying to drive them hard with multiple firings of your brass in 1" tenon actions, and the .545" to .550" UltraMags, Noslers and Blaser Magnums can also have similar issues. This is not noticeable with the first firing of new brass, but you will get sticky extraction very quickly with maximum

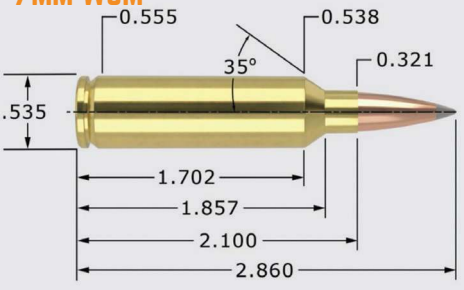
7MM REM MAG



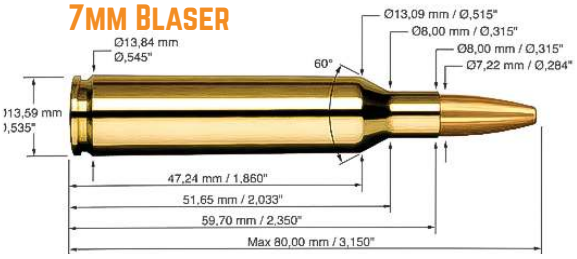
7MM SAUM



7MM WSM



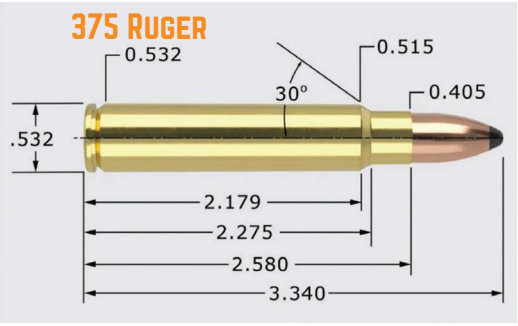
7mm Blaser



load repeat firings.

So how do we get the best performance out of the most popular NZ hunting rifle? The 7mm Rem Mag is a little too long, the WSMs and SAUMs are little fat. We want something less than 2.500" long and .545" fat. **The closest to this was the 7mm Blaser at 2.350" x .545", and it gained popularity with custom rifle builders but has never taken off in factory rifles.** There are very little if any factory ammo options available, Norma no longer lists it, and it is now becoming increasingly hard to find brass to load for it. And as we're about to see there is the final nail in the 7mm Blaser's coffin coming right up!

375 Ruger



There is another newish family of cartridges in an in-between diameter based on the 2007 vintage collaboration by Ruger and Hornady – the 375 Ruger. This had a rim diameter of .532", the same as the rim size on the 7mm Rem mag, but remains at .532" and doesn't step down to .513" ahead of the belt, wasting capacity. This body diameter has proven to give easy repeated firing extraction in 1" tenon actions while maximizing capacity.

Of course this new cartridge family based on the 375 Ruger as I'm sure you've all guessed is, wait for it … Hornady's PRC! This stands for Precision Rifle Cartridge. The 2.580" long 300 PRC was the first cab off the rank, and provides slightly more performance than the 300 Win Mag. Next was the 2.030" long 6.5 PRC, which has a little more capacity than the 6.5/284, and easily fits in short actions. And then in 2022 the one we'd been waiting for - the 2.280" long 7mm PRC. Now we have the perfect specs to gain maximum performance out of the Tikka T3 – 2.280"x .532" with a water capacity of 80gns, just a smidge smaller than the 82gn 7mm Rem Mag.

Other important dimensions that Hornady definitely got right are the neck and throat diameters and lengths. Their neck clearance is just .004"/4 thou, and their throat diameter of .2846" gives clearance of only .0006" - unheard of in factory rifles and cartridges. These tolerances are what we aim for in custom built rifles to maximize bullet alignment and therefore accuracy, so full kudos to Hornady for spec'ing their chambers and ammo this way! The throat also has a .230" freebore, so when seating the long, high BC bullets out near the lands, they aren't seated too deeply, but still fit in the magazine. **The 175gn ELD-X seated at a just touch measures 3.365" OAL in a SAAMI spec chamber, and so just fits in the 3.375" Tikka magazine.**

Hornady also spec'd an 8" twist barrel to stabilise these high BC bullets, which is something the European rifle manufacturers are being pretty slow to uptake. And finally the SAAMI maximum pressure for the PRC is 65,000psi, as opposed to 61,000psi for the Rem Mag – all adding to potentially increased performance in both factory ammo and handloads. To this end, Hornady released two factory loads - in the Precision Hunter line a 175gn ELD-X quoted at 3000fps, and in the Precision Match line a 180gn ELD-M @ 2975fps. They have added a third load in the Outfitter line, the 160gn CX monolithic @ 3000fps. These velocities are achievable due to the higher SAAMI pressure spec.

TIME TO BURN SOME POWDER

Now that we've run through all the theoretical stuff on paper and decided that yes, the 7mm PRC is just the bees knees, its about time we put our theories into practice, and burnt some powder! First up we needed a test platform to be able to put the 7mm PRC across the Oehler Ballistic Laboratory and see just what performance it is actually capable of. A Tikka T3x action courtesy of Beretta NZ, DPT alloy chassis stock and suppressor, Hardy light contour fluted 8" twist barrel. It was chambered with a Dave Manson 7mm PRC reamer and we soon had the

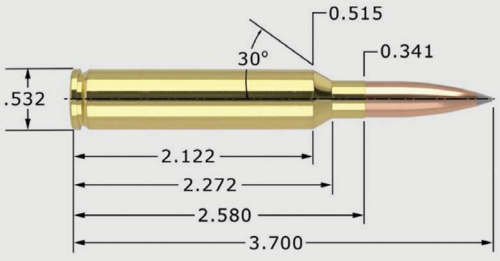


7mm Rem Mag left, 7mm PRC right, both with 175gn ELD-X, showing how far down into the powder column they need to be seated to fit in the magazine in the 7mm Rem Mag

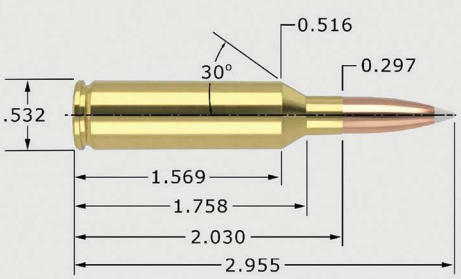


The 7mm PRC fits in a Tikka T3 magazine with the 175gn ELD-X seated to a just touch in the SAAMI spec chamber

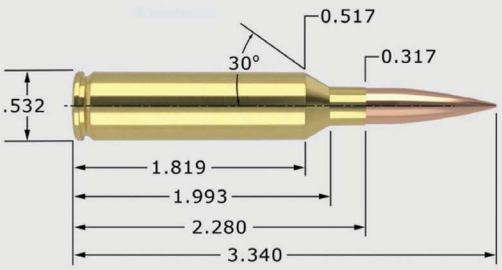
300 PRC



6.5 PRC



7mm PRC

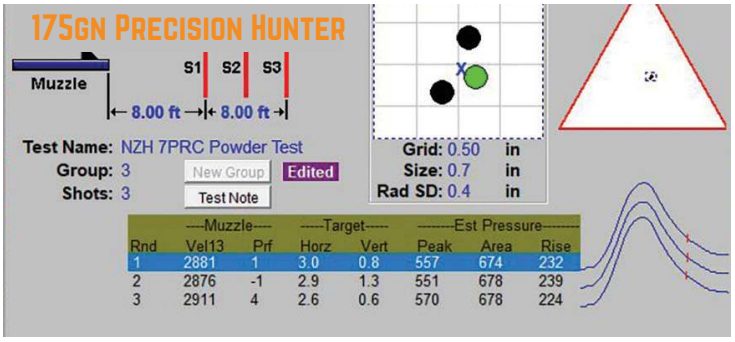


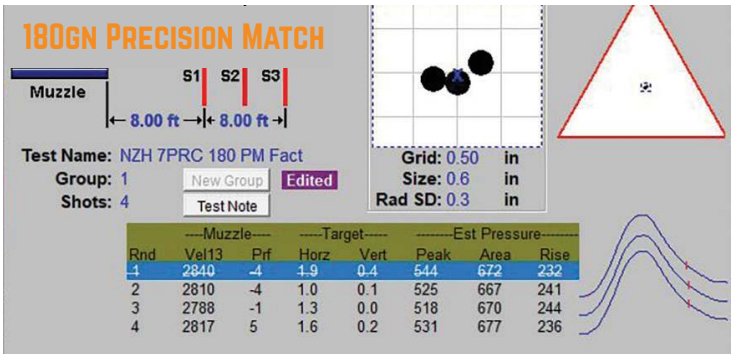
Powder	Charge (gns)	Velocity @65,000psi	Load Density
Reloder 26	69	3050fps	95%
Winchester StaBall	71.5	2950fps	90%
ADI 2217	70	2975fps	98%
ADI 2225	71	2980fps	99%
IMR 7828SSC	67.5	2965fps	80%
Viht N570	74	3075fps	106%
Reloder 33	79.5	3075fps @63,000psi	110%
175gn Precision Hunter	66	2890fps @56,000psi	Factory load
180gn Precision Match	65.5	2820fps @53,000psi	Factory load



rifle built, strain gauge attached, and we were ready to roll! Our intention is to start at a 24" barrel length, run a series of velocity verses pressures tests across factory ammo and handloads, testing a range of the most suitable powders, to see if the PRC lives up to its performance claims. We'll also test brass life of Hornady and other available brass brands. Then we'll progressively shorten the barrel down to 20" which is where I think there'll be a lot of demand for this chambering. We build a lot of permanently suppressed 20" 7mm Rem Mags now (called SuperPigs as they are our original BushPigs on steroids), and the 7mm PRC should perform even better in this configuration.

First up we ran the factory loads across the Oehler. There has been a bit of commentary on social media about the variability of the factory ammo, initially being too hot and now not making claimed velocities. Unfortunately Hornady cannot control how people use their products, how clean they keep their rifle's bore, variability in custom rifle chamberings etc. The early factory ammo certainly seemed to live up to the velocity claims, but some rifles with different spec chambers had a few pressure issues. The 175gn Precision Hunter load averaged just under 2900fps/56,000psi out of our minimum SAAMI spec 24" test barrel, and the 180gn Precision Match did 2820fps/53,000psi – both at 15 degrees C. So it certainly looks like Hornady have backed off their factory load to provide a wider margin for error. Nice as 3000fps might have been, 2900fps with a .360 G7 BC projectile is still superb factory ammo performance. And it boded well for our handload testing with lots of headroom pressure wise to allow for significant velocity increases. **Both loads averaged under .75 MOA accuracy.**

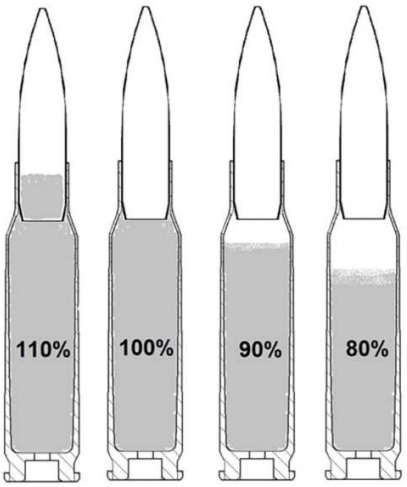




Both loads averaged under .75 MOA accuracy.

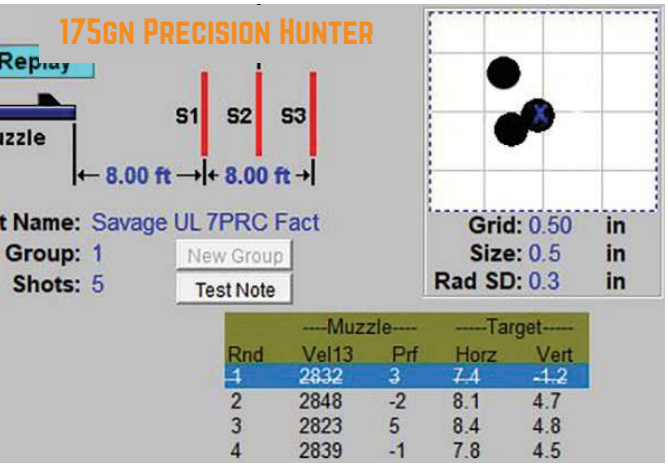
As the 175gn ELD-X is used by Hornady in their Precision Hunter line and is one of my preferred hunting projectiles at these sorts of velocities, we confined this first stage of powder/velocity/pressure tests to it. We'll test a wider range of projectiles in the second part of this series. We also stuck with Hornady brass at this stage. The table below is with the 175gn ELD-X with the seven powders we tested loaded to 65,000psi, except for Reloder 33 and the two factory loads as listed:

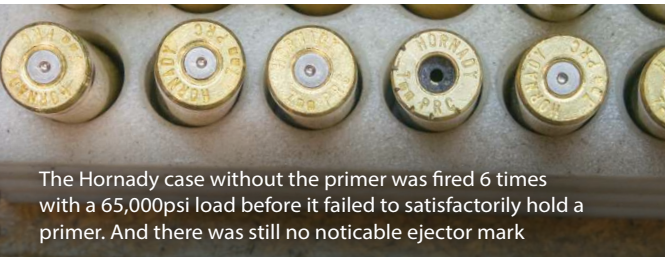
The load density is a percentage of the volume to the base of the neck occupied by the powder charge in a constant, approx. 2 second pour through a normal funnel with no extra settling. If you use a long drop tube you will get lower densities – especially with coarse powders



The load density is the space occupied by the powder in the case, expressed as a percentage of the volume up to the base of the neck


A long drop tube can turn 110% loading density into 100%





The Hornady case without the primer was fired 6 times with a 65,000psi load before it failed to satisfactorily hold a primer. And there was still no noticable ejector mark

like N570, changing its 106% result into 98%. Reloder 33 isn't as coarse as 570 and therefore doesn't settle as much with the long drop tube, and we decided we'd have too much powder compression if we continued to load up to 65,000psi. The results were also a little erratic, which is a sign of a powder that's too slow for the application, so we abandoned it with this bullet weight. It would most likely work great with the heavier 190/195gn projectiles if we decide to experiment with these in the future. This is the best powder for the 175/180gners in the Sako/Tikka 7mm Rem Mags, so it shows that 2 grain less capacity in the PRC case definitely changed the powder's characteristics.

With the sensible freebore length in the SAAMI spec chambering, only the boattail protrudes below the neck/shoulder junction, and therefore Reloder 26's 95% density means no powder compression at all, and no air space either. I actually don't mind up to 5% compression as it ensures there is no air space and the powder is held in position and is always in the same relationship to the primer flash which minimises velocity spread. Therefore Reloder 26, ADI's 2217 and 2225 and Vihtavouri N570 will be the powders we'll do further load development and accuracy testing with. Right now Reloder 26 stands out, and is the powder used by Hornady in the two factory loads we tested. The 175gn Precision Hunter had 66gns of it, and the 180gn Precision match 65.5gns, which plotted in right amongst the velocities/pressures we got as we worked up.

There has been a bit of chatter on social media about the 7mm PRC being a lemon and not capable of producing the claimed 3000fps velocities with the 175gn projectiles out of 24" barrels, but we've proved already that this is more than attainable at the SAAMI pressure specs. There have also been claims that the Hornady brass is not up to the pressure required to get that velocity. I loaded one case repeatedly at the 65,000psi level until it failed to securely hold a primer, and it took 6 firings to reach this point. While I expect the likes of the ADG brass we are yet to test will do better, I'd say most would be happy with 5 to 6 loadings for this sort of performance especially when you consider how much cheaper the Hornady brass is than other more premium offerings.

SAVAGE 110 ULTRALITE

We also wanted to see what was available in off-the-shelf factory rifles at this stage, so we tracked down a Savage 110 Ultralite courtesy of Nioa NZ. This model has a 22 inch Proof Research carbon fibre barrel and weighs 6.175 pounds. Set up with a Swarovski 3.5-18x44 Z5 in Talley rings, the whole rig weighed 7.5 pounds, and so would make a pretty respectable mountain hunting rifle. It shot the 175gn PH factory load at 2840fps and put the 3 shots used to sight it in into a half inch group. We'll do more testing with this rifle in the next issue, but it was good enough to give to Andrew McGregor from Manawatu Hunting and Fishing to take on his pre-roar Sika hunt in the Kaimanawas.

We're well and truly out of space for this issue, so tune in next time when we continue to work with the 7mm PRC in our factory and custom rifles, and answer the question we started this article series with!



Andrew McGregor from Manawatu Hunting and Fishing using the Savage Ultralite on his pre-roar Sika hunt in the Kaimanawas. He shot this lovely fat hind at 520 yards, right in the shoulder, dropped and didn't move

NEW FROM HARDY RIFLE, THE

PROJECT X *Hunter*



STANDARD AND MAGNUM CALIBRES AVAILABLE IN A 5.5LB PACKAGE!

Designed to be incredibly lightweight while boasting a ton of features to make it count, when it counts!









WWW.PROJECTX.COM

HARDY™
NO COMPROMISE

Bushnell® Live Animal Gallery

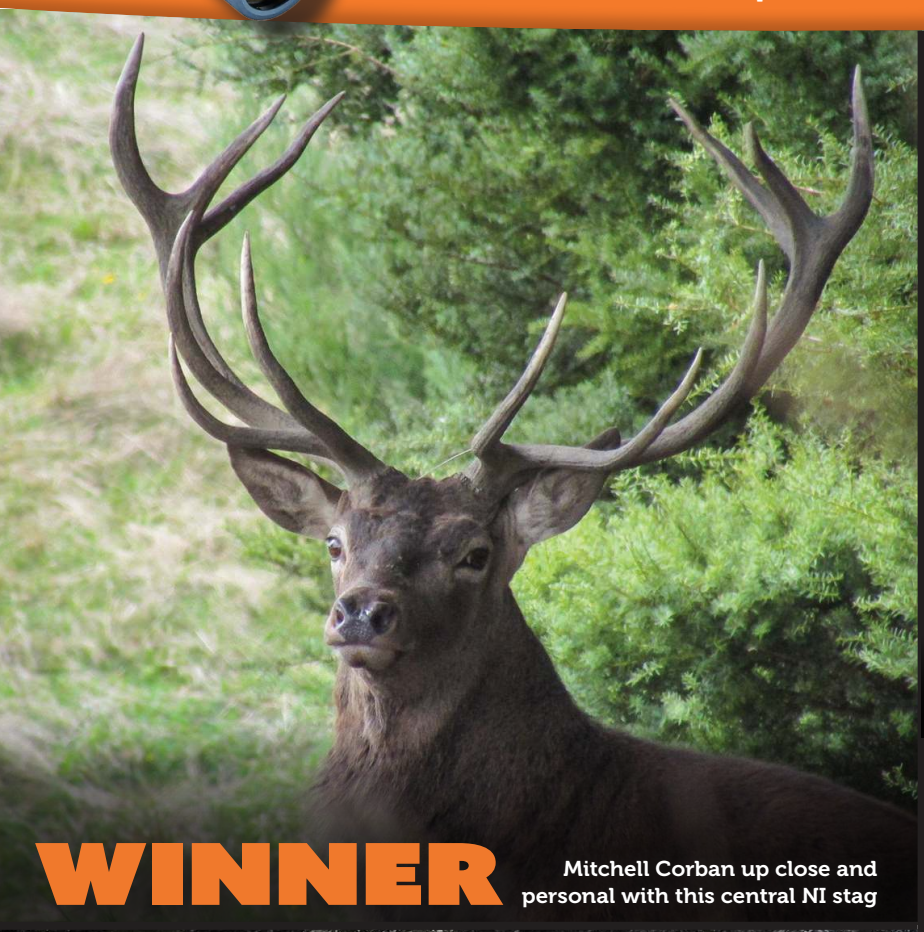
Bushnell are proud to promote this page aimed at celebrating our game animals.



Send in your photos of live game animals to luke@nzhunter.co.nz

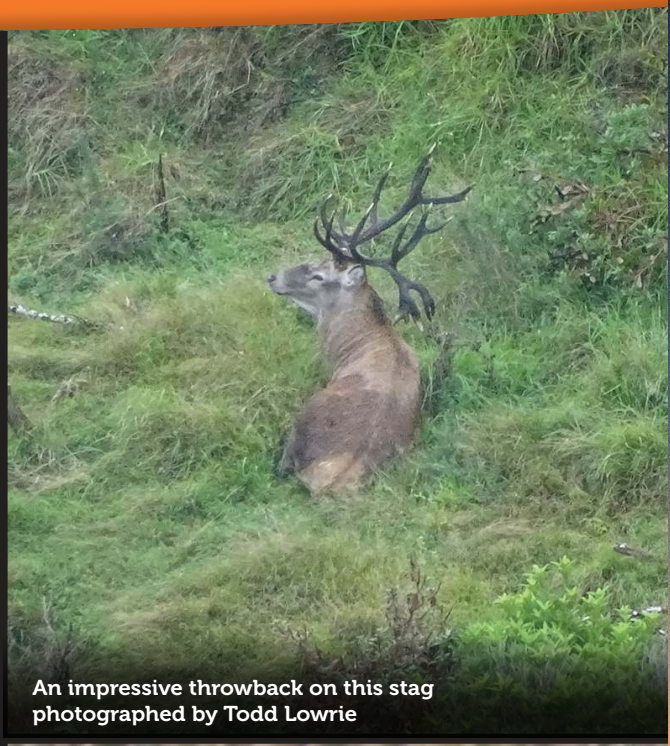
to go in the draw to win an exciting product each issue

THE PRIZE FOR THIS ISSUE IS...
BUSHNELL H2O 8X42 BINOCULARS
WITH AN RRP OF $299.99!

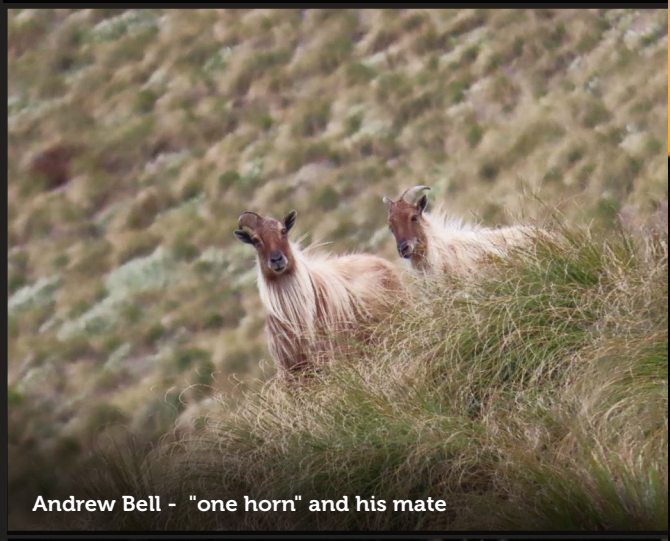


WINNER

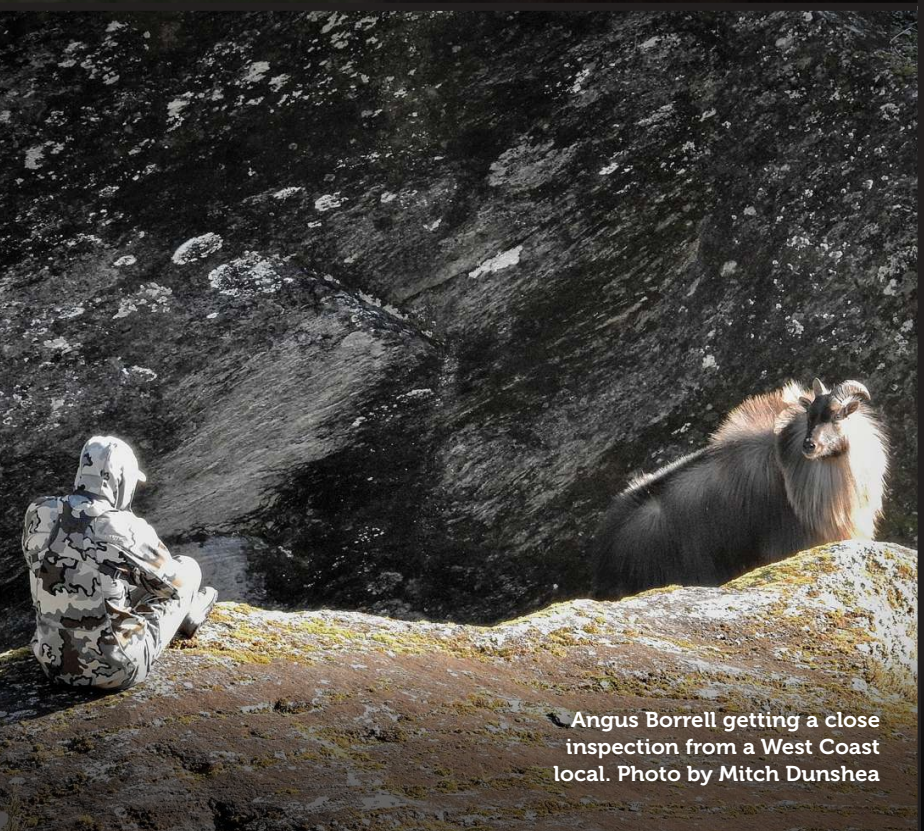
Mitchell Corban up close and personal with this central NI stag



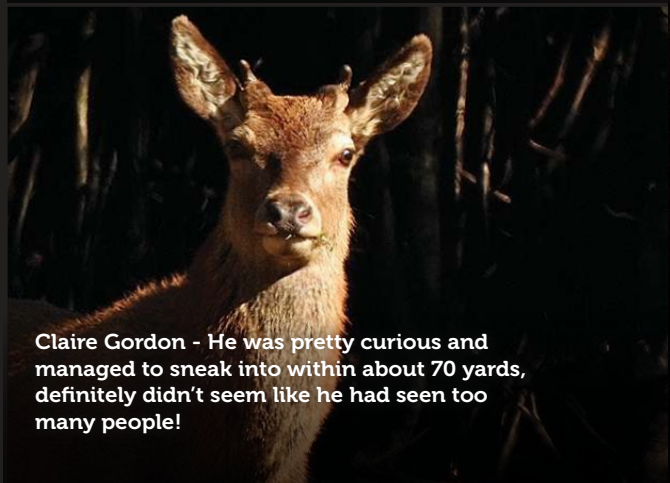
An impressive throwback on this stag photographed by Todd Lowrie



Andrew Bell - "one horn" and his mate



Angus Borrell getting a close inspection from a West Coast local. Photo by Mitch Dunshea



Claire Gordon - He was pretty curious and managed to sneak into within about 70 yards, definitely didn't seem like he had seen too many people!



INREACH® SERIES TWO-WAY GLOBAL MESSAGING | SOS ALERTS | LOCATION SHARING

GARMIN

Active satellite subscription required. Some jurisdictions regulate or prohibit the use of satellite communication devices. It is the responsibility of the user to know and follow all applicable laws in the jurisdictions where the device is intended to be used.

© 2022 Garmin Ltd. or its subsidiaries.



LOOKING BACK

WRITTEN BY ~ WILLIE DULEY

In celebration of 100 issues of publication and over 16 years in the print game, I thought it would be of interest to share some of my behind-the-scenes insights of this quite remarkable journey my parents Greg and Fi have all taken us all on

I can still vividly remember my early teenage years when Greg was sent a Dear John email (actually more of a single line bomb) out of the blue from the hunting publications he'd been a regular contributor to for some years.

Being abruptly cast aside as Gun Editor of the existing publications was a puzzling one for Greg to comprehend, having passionately poured years of time and energy into this position. What to do now?

Following a lifetime of working on the land across varied forms, Greg and Fi were operating their own orchard and vineyard and managing a large deer farm at the time. This could sound appealing and somewhat romantic from the outside, but at the coal face, running a productive and profitable horticulture operation requires intense and focussed months of labour, particularly around harvest time (which seemed to always creep into the roar for some apple varieties). You're at the mercy of the weather gods and too much rain or hail at certain times means absolute dire straits with more on the line to lose than just a day spent tent bound. The prices you receive are highly volatile, meaning you outlay a year of eyewatering production costs in the hope of being fairly compensated 12 months later, but often staying well below the red line and left hanging on at the mercy of the banks. On a positive note, it does seem that the horticultural industry has been on a golden run pretty much ever since Greg and Fi more recently leased out their land - Murphy's law of course! And then came Cyclone Gabrielle and the lessees walking away and leaving the horrendous mess for them to clean up…with no income to pay the mortgage to boot – oh well, back to square one…

Starting their very own publication hadn't even crossed my parent's minds until one of Dad's hunting clients (he was a regular hunting guide at Ngamatea Station at the time) suggested that striking while the iron was hot and producing their own magazine was the logical next step. Although those who know Dad well also know he's somewhat of a practical and technical genius who seeks to master everything he tackles, funnily enough while he excelled in the maths and sciences, he actually failed school Cert-English (probably through lack







Greg, Willie and James Duley - 2010



of application…) so the thought of becoming an editor of a hunting magazine was a little ironic. Mum is a true workhorse, kind and personable with a wicked sense of humour, and she really is the glue that holds our team together. Prepared to add a new venture with a potentially more reliable cash flow and flexible work life to their already busy work load, she was quickly committed and the two of them set about.

Fast forward six months or so with a team of dedicated writers on board and some advertisers convinced to support the new publication, Greg and Fi released Issue 1 of NZ Hunter Magazine. **Looking back, it was probably quite a milestone in the kiwi hunting scene, as the magazine seemed to embody the idea and spirit of the much under-represented but passionate modern-day public land hunter.** Which through photos and text, really just represented the way of life that my family lives and breathes every day. Through a new level of design, real-deal stories, series and technical information, the magazine proved an overnight success. Within a year it sold more magazines per issue than any others in the outdoor interest category – more than rugby, fishing, boating, tramping, motoring, other sports etc. Quite remarkable stuff which I guess represents the loyalty and content-hungriness of the kiwi hunting scene.

Now over 16 years later, the magazine is still at the top, still heading out to shops and people's doors every two months without having ever missed a beat. The environment and platforms on which people consume their content has certainly shifted and there's undoubtedly been plenty of challenges and changes along the way, but the magazine continues to grow and punch well above its weight. Heck, the issue following the initial Covid-19 lockdown was was one of the highest selling in the magazine's history.

The notable change you will have witnessed in recent times was the energy injection of geotechnical engineer Luke Care and his lovely wife Samantha who hailed from the Waikato. After 10 successful but long years of ongoing deadlines and hard graft, Greg and Fi wanted some time and flexibility back in their lives (which has since mostly been snaffled up by volunteer service to the various hunting and conservation groups, and the kiwi recovery program



Sam and Luke - 2023





On top of Mt Sefton

and predator trapping network in the Eastern Kawekas (oh, and the TV Show of course!) and they explored the option of employing an associate editor to share their workload. Our entire NZ Hunter team is certainly somewhat unique in that our passion for the outdoors and desire for the betterment of hunting in New Zealand always comes first before financial decisions, and at the sacrifice of our business operations. **Without having ever been stated, all members of our small and passionate team are expected to contribute to the various hunting Foundations and groups in whatever capacity they can or need to, which undoubtedly places greater time pressure and makes carrying out your core job harder.**

Fortunately, Luke (a self-confessed hunting bookworm) has thrived in his role with the magazine for over six years now and I think we'd all agree he's taken it to new heights in this modern era. His understanding and passion for all forms of hunting right across the country, coupled with his cheery and sharp intellect have made him an extremely valued member of the team. He's also equally as understanding of the need to give back to the sector and can see that we're at such a pivotal stage with our big game animals, so voluntarily shares his skillset far and wide (sorry Sam!). You've also probably watched him become a great hunting companion on our television episodes, which to be fair, has seen him amass quite a prized collection of horn and antler.

You might hear some people say print media is dead, but Luke is definitely one to refute that theory. Undoubtedly it is becoming more challenging to remain viable and current with quick and low-cost social media avenues at people's disposal, but it does seem that the life-revaluating effects of Covid have seen people ditching their screens and devices and returning to hard copy fact and fiction more than ever before. With a steady demand for the magazines themselves, our biggest threats presently are rapidly inflating printing and postage costs crippling the already small margins on each magazine, and the ongoing tussle for print advertising from brands with so many options now at their disposal to promote products.

Nonetheless, I'm sure the team will ensure NZ Hunter Magazine remains, adapts, and continues to get better every year into the future. On reflection (which is something our fast paced team rarely have time to do), there's been huge change within the industry over even our relatively short lifespan. **Hunting magazines have come and gone, been sold, and then sold again. Some have tried to go digital only to retire shortly after, while some have popped up with promises to reinvent the hunting print-media wheel and then have not lasted the distance.** Looping back again to our team's genuine passion and care for hunting in New Zealand, which can at times create us a lot of additional work, I guess it is probably what keeps us going and is one of our greatest assets. We go above and beyond, even when it's not in our own commercial interests, because hunting, the outdoors, and conservation is our lives. It's what drives us, what get us up each morning, what gives us so much physical, mental and spiritual enjoyment and fulfilment. Failure isn't really an option as we just keep on going no matter what the circumstances.

By sheer chance, this 100th issue coincides with 10 years (and near on 100 episodes) of our television show NZ Hunter Adventures going to air. Just like the magazine for Greg, Fi and Luke, the show has been all consuming and a truly whirlwind ride for me but that's another story in itself.

Hats off to Greg and Fi on their initial vision of the magazine and their countless years and hours of work putting it all together, and to Luke for accepting the baton when it was passed and setting an all-new pace in a fast changing environment. I'm confident it's played an integral part in many budding hunter's lives and the strength and maturity the hunting sector as a whole now holds.

And lastly to our thousands of readers, the many article columnists and free-lance contributors over the years, thank you. Without your support, we certainly wouldn't be celebrating this great milestone. **Be sure to keep submitting your great adventures to share with your fellow hunters, and with a bit of luck, you'll be reading a similar article from me when we have the big two tonne issue on the deck!**

FEDERAL

BERGER HYBRID HUNTER

Blend the profile of a low-drag match bullet with a traditional hunting projectile design and you're ready to take on almost anything that walks on four legs.



AVAILABLE IN A RANGE OF CALIBRES

- Hybrid tangent-secant ogive bullet design
- High ballistic coefficient
- Superior accuracy across a wide range of factory firearms
- Lethal and reliable terminal performance on medium and big game
- Loaded to tight specifications with Gold Medal primers, nickel-plated brass and specialised propellant



RELIABLE | ACCURATE | AFFORDABLE

1371 PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY NIOA | www.nioa.co.nz www.federalpremium.com



THE MID BURN MONSTER

WRITTEN BY ~ MITCH THORN
SOUTHISLANDRIFLEWALKERS

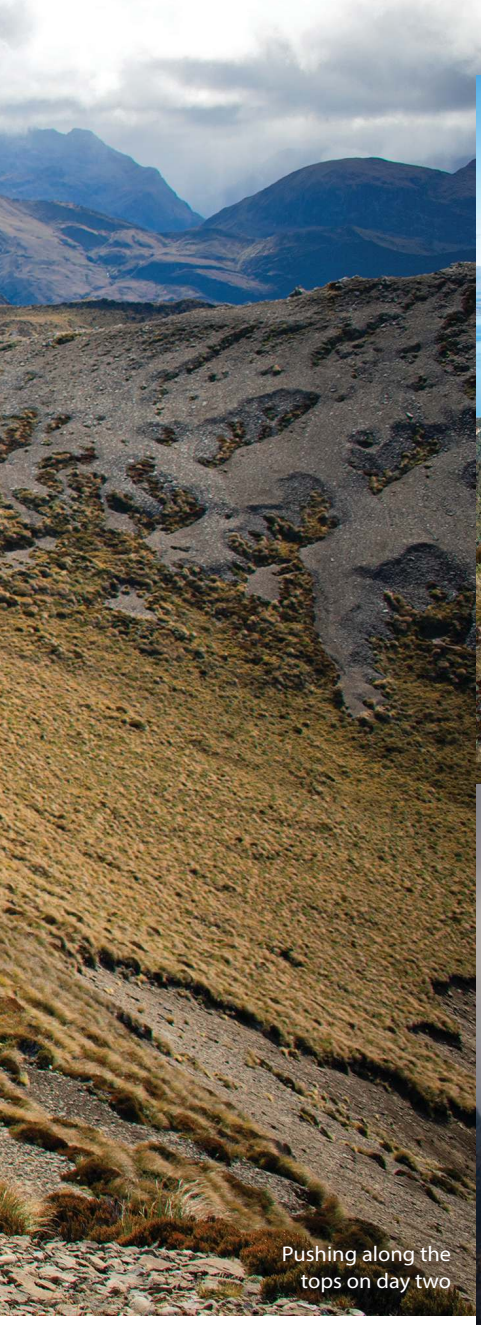
"Congratulations, the 2023 FWF ballot has been drawn and your party has been allocated a block."

It's the email we all want to receive; an exclusive invitation to one of the world's most incredible hunting opportunities. Fiordland is world-renowned for its steep mountains, jungle-like bush and wild weather – described as 'the Amazon on top of the Himalayas'.

At 6am on Wednesday,19th April, we were full of nerves and excitement as we boated across Lake Te Anau heading for the Mid Burn. The block was shrouded in early morning darkness, leaving my imagination to run wild about what was ahead of us. With ten days' worth of gear, we set off into the unknown, immediately pushing our way through thick ferns and wet bush with our sights set on the tops above. **As the sun rose behind us, the morning chorus chimed out above with the bellbirds' call endlessly echoing under the canopy -** when one song finished another picked up where it left off. We pushed our way through the thick understory disturbing the breakfasts of the fantails that were swarming behind us. **A couple of hours into the climb we stopped for smoko, and watched a pair of kākā chattering in the canopy above.** It hadn't taken long for the natural beauty of Fiordland to capture my attention. After nine hours of bashing, we broke out of the bushline ready to dump packs at the first campsite we stumbled across.

The forecast was what dreams are made of. Our plan was to make the most of it and hunt the tops for as long as possible. Because it was fourth period, we weren't sure the bulls would still be bugling down in the bush. We didn't go far from camp that evening; partly because we were knackered from the climb but also because we didn't want to rush past any potential country. **We had no success watching the surrounding bush lines during the hunt, and the same happened the next morning.**

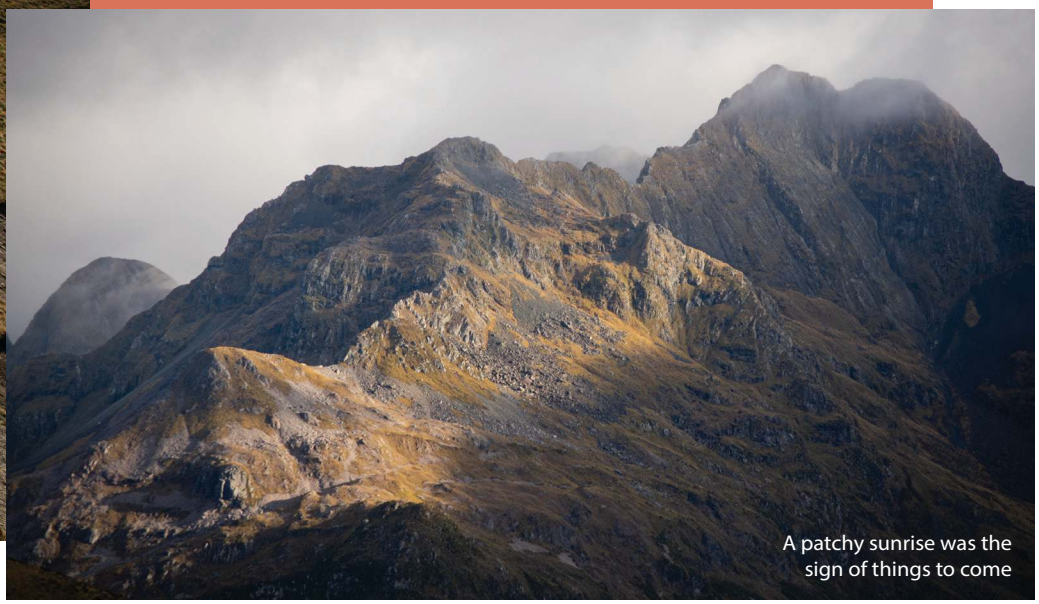
With another bluebird day shining above us we set off up the ridge to shift camp further into the block. It was a strange feeling on our way up - we could still see Te Anau township and the busy Milford Road, and our cell phones had reception. In my previous visits to the blocks, I had hunted on the West Coast, a place where isolation is so confronting it's unavoidable. I couldn't help but feel slightly disappointed, and was worried we weren't going to have the adventure I was expecting. At that stage of the hunt, we could've been hunting the gentle tops above Lake Sumner and I wouldn't have picked the difference. As we summited the peak at the top of the ridgeline, I was embarrassed I'd even had those thoughts.



Pushing along the tops on day two



The view across Middle Fiord to the Murchison Mountains



A patchy sunrise was the sign of things to come

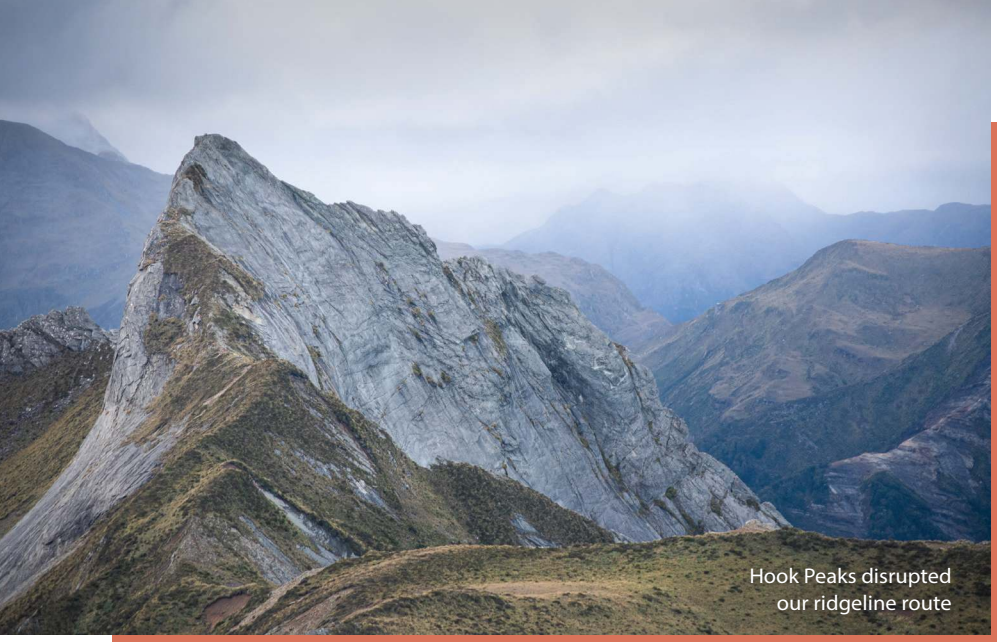
There it was, the real Fiordland. A panorama of mountains straight from a Hollywood blockbuster standing proud and spanning as far as we could see. Impassable ridgelines led into sheer rock faces that plunged through the dark green forest into the depths of the middle fiord of Lake Te Anau. It looked like you could take a step off the peak and fall straight down into the lake. Before we could truly admire the view, our focus shifted to right below our feet where we might have done just that. The gradual ridge we had followed dropped off to a sheer cliff face some 200 metres down. As anyone who's standing on top of a big drop would do, we started tossing stones over the edge as if to remind ourselves that yup, that's a long way down...

Moving camp had opened up more folds in the landscape so we set up glassing above a new bush edge for the evening. Raddy spotted a cow with its yearling feeding out in the scrub, a reassuring sight after prior unsuccessful attempts.

The following morning a young bull joined the cow and yearling. He was only a spiker, but left us in no doubt we were in Wapiti country. **Spotting the cows had lifted our spirits but spotting the spiker had us excited.** He was chasing the cows around the hillside, but they weren't having a bar of it. We were worried we had missed the rut - well at least the peak of it. The only sign of the bugle was a halfhearted moan we heard faintly rising from the bush below. This helped motivate our tops hunting plan, as our chances of finding one in the bush were slim to none if they weren't making any noise.

We were in high spirits as we packed up camp to head deeper into the block. Our weather window was invaluable as we neared the campsite we had spotted on the topo map. There was no doubting it was flat, but sitting directly on the crest of the ridgeline there was absolutely no shelter around. "It's not often you get to camp in a spot like this in Fiordland", I commented as if trying to tempt fate.

That evening we quickly spotted a young 8-pointer bull making his way up the ridgeline across the basin we were watching. He had incredible shape for such a young animal, feeding our imaginations as to what he would look like in a few more years. **Before we could get too carried away, those thoughts manifested, with a heavy timbered ten-pointer following up the same ridgeline.** He had decent length and ten strong tines. He caught our attention but, after watching him for a while, we decided he wasn't at his prime. A good Wapiti bull won't reach maturity until he's at that seven to eight year mark. Our estimates had this bull in the four to five year range. Regardless, it was bloody awesome to see. We carried on watching him and glassing the surrounding country until we couldn't make out a bush from a bull through the binos. On our



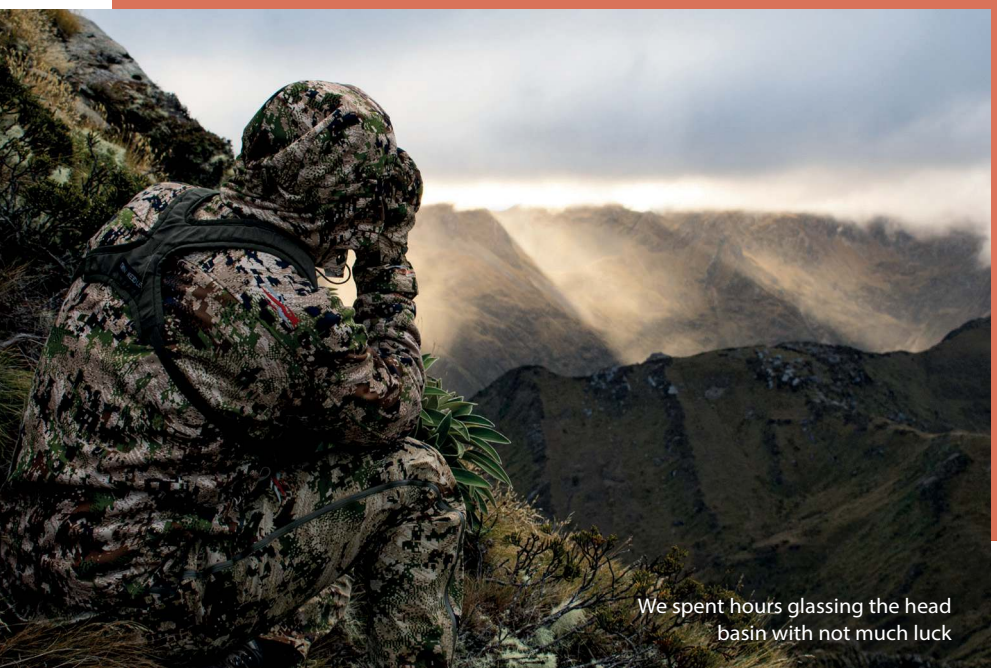
Hook Peaks disrupted our ridgeline route



Not the surprise you want to return to camp to after dark with weather forecast the next day



The 10 pointer that followed the younger stag to the tops



We spent hours glassing the head basin with not much luck



This was the Fiordland we were hoping for

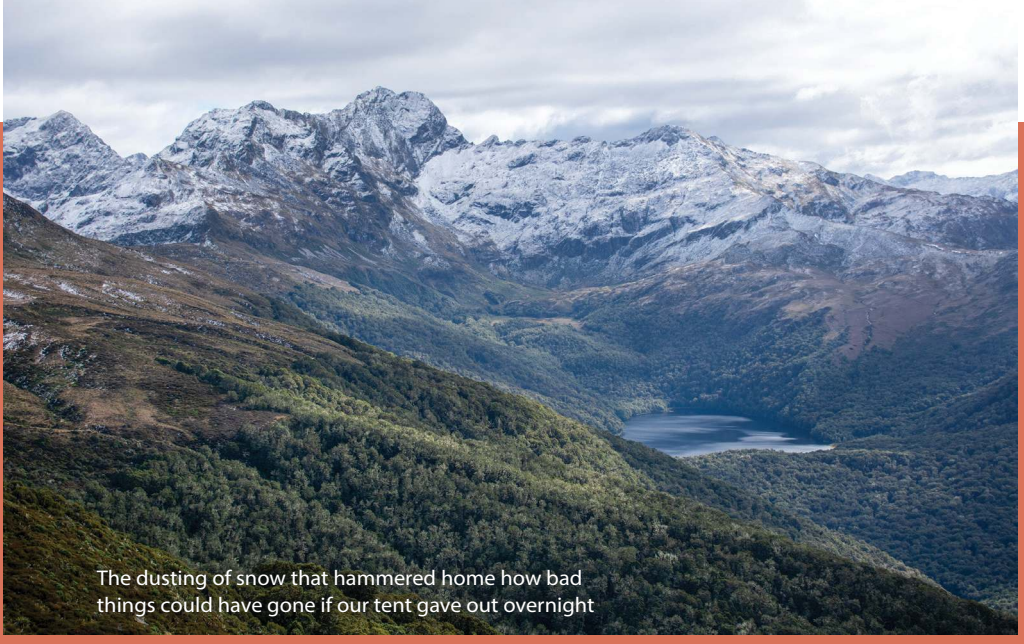
return to camp, we heard a kiwi calling from nearby, which took us by surprise considering we were a few hundred vertical meters above the bushline. That topped off a near-perfect day of Wapiti hunting in Fiordland. Between the views, the birdlife and the bulls we went to sleep content as the Milky Way glimmered above us.

The hunt had a different feel to it the next morning. In some ways it felt more serious; we were starting to spot bigger animals and we felt close to finding that old donk we wanted. On top of that, our glassing possie for the morning opened up the rest of our block - we could see all the way to the back basins. Between the tussock-filled tops, scrubby faces, bush edges and large river flats there was almost too much country to look into. The fractured light of our broken sunrise guided my glassing efforts; it's always easier to spot an animal illuminated by the morning sun. The wind was slowly starting to build, pushing along the odd patch of drizzle in between the glimpses of sunshine.

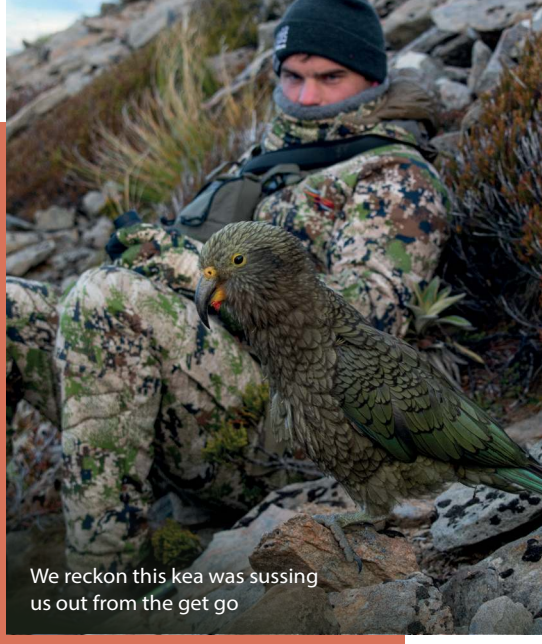
Our siesta that day raised some serious questions. Arriving back to camp, we found our gear scattered all over the ridgeline, including my ripped-up water bladder. The local kea population must have had a blast dragging any loose bits of kit around. Thankfully, they hadn't taken a shine to the tents themselves. Our next question was whether we should move camp or not. From a hunting perspective we were in the perfect spot; we wouldn't be able to glass as much country from anywhere else. From a commonsense perspective we were camping in one of the worst spots possible, completely exposed on the crest of the ridgeline. **The weather was forecast to turn the next day, with only about 20 mm of rain but potentially strong winds.** The West Coast would get hammered, but we would be sheltered from the worst of it this far east. There was nowhere else to camp on the tops around us; if we wanted to be sensible, we would have to drop down to the bush. We ummed and ahhed for a bit. The words "she'll be right" were thrown around a few times, and before we knew it, I was collecting the biggest rocks I could find to tie down the guide ropes.

Apart from the incredible sunset, the evening glass was a real letdown. The same cow and yearling fed up into the scrub but there was nothing else on the tops. Our promised land wasn't delivering. Right on the last light, we spotted a bull chasing a cow across the river flats. With the camera zoomed in to 125x, and a bit of squinting, we could make out some antlers. Enough to let the imagination go to work, but it was too far off to get an accurate assessment. We returned to camp after dark to the first significant hurdle of the trip.

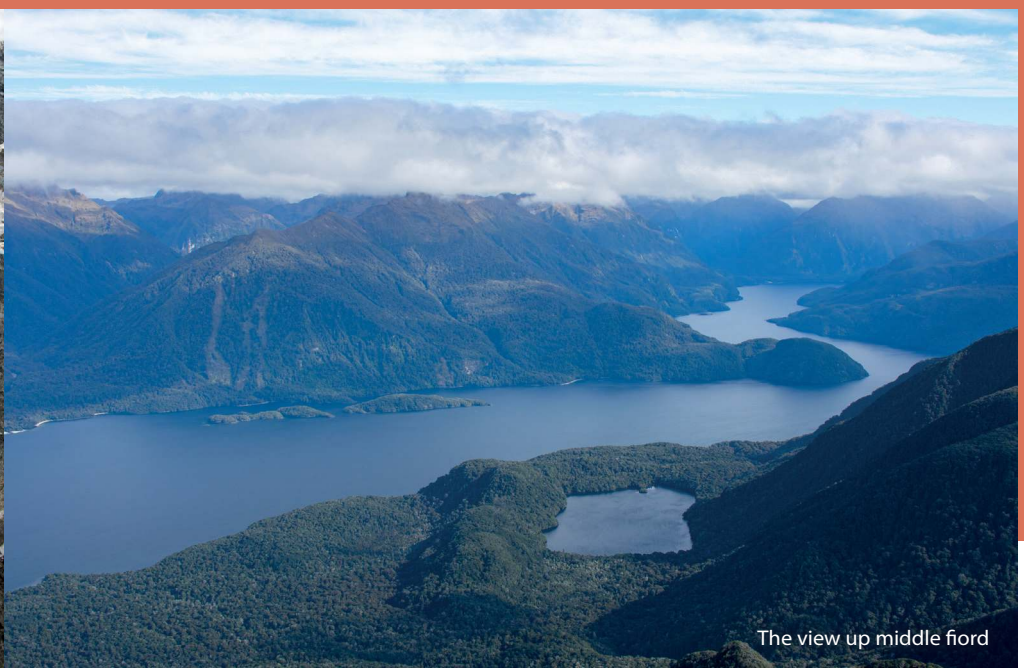
The kea weren't happy that we had put most of our loose gear inside the tent, so they tried to make their way in themselves. They'd made a rip in the top of Raddy's tent about the size of a rugby ball. Bloody bastards. It was too



The dusting of snow that hammered home how bad things could have gone if our tent gave out overnight



We reckon this kea was sussing us out from the get go



The view up middle fiord



This kea found our basecamp down in the bush, needless to say we were nervous

big to patch, but thankfully, we'd carried in a couple of flies, so we made a dome shelter over Raddy's tent with one of them. Throughout the night, I could hear my cutlery set jingling in my metal mug. I thought it was due to the gusting wind, and after it woke me a few times, I finally went to move it. It turns out there was a kea trying to grab it out from under the tent fly- cheeky bugger. At 6am, I woke to Raddy's headtorch because the kea had kept him up most of the night, messing with his gear. You love to hate them.

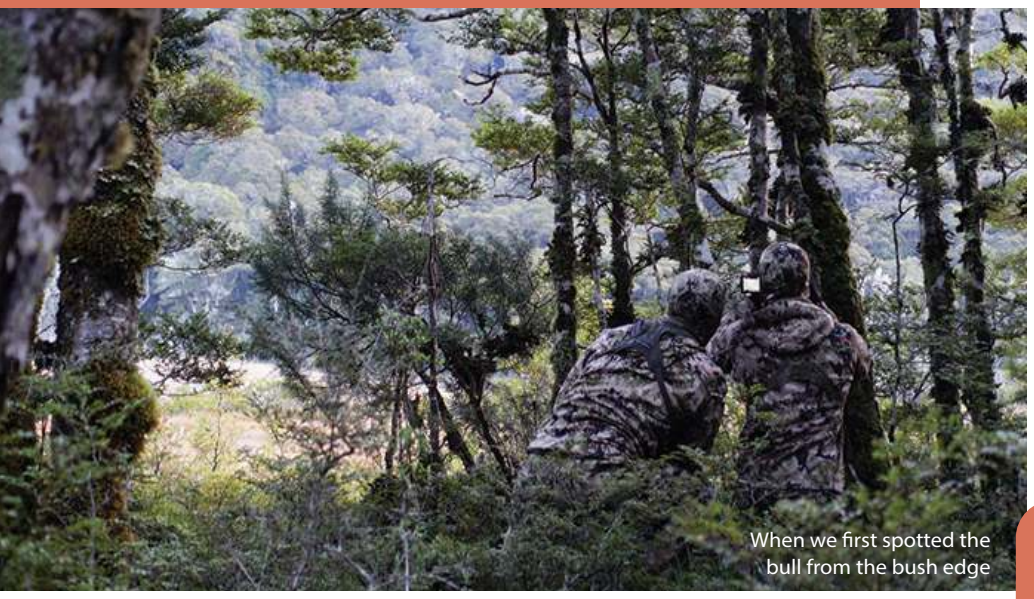
The weather was starting to pack it in. We had planned to hunker down for the day, but after breakfast, things took a turn for the worse. **Through each gust of wind, we held the walls of the tent to give it a bit more support.** During one gust, I decided to film a shot for the YouTube video. As if acting up for the camera, the gust hit harder than the rest, and we got utterly flattened. One of the poles snapped, and now our 'good tent' was in poor shape. We wrapped a towel around the break, as the last thing we needed was the sharp edge ripping up the fly. Our nonchalant attitude flipped as quickly as the pole had snapped. We weren't in serious danger, but we knew that the wrong decision now could easily change that. **The wind was forecast to keep picking up, but luckily, the rain wasn't due for another couple of hours.** We decided it was time (albeit a bit late) to pack up and drop off the tops. In hindsight, the next 30 minutes were pretty comical. Raddy ran our gear from the broken tent to our kea-ripped tent whilst Chris and I held the poles, trying to save the fly. We managed to pack it away without ripping it and quickly packed our other tent. With our tails tucked between our legs, we dropped down to the bush as the rain started to fall. Thankfully, the tent came with a splint - a small metal tube that we fed over the break and taped into position. With a fly above each tent and some decent shelter under the canopy, we went to sleep listening to the jet engine winds ripping across the tops.

Waking up to a dusting of snow above us reinforced how bad things could have been if our tent had given out overnight. We knew we were limit testing the 3-season ultralight tent - limit found. It was a dumb decision, but with two working tents and blue skies above us, we were ready to get back into it. We aimed to get a closer look at the bull we had spotted on the riverbed, and it was time to go bush. The descent was easy enough, and we found a great spot to set up a base camp on the valley floor.

We waited for the wind to flip before setting off up valley to watch the flats for the evening. As we neared the clearing, we stopped inside the bush edge for a quick scan before finding somewhere to park up. Chris spotted him almost immediately; he was bedded down in the tussock across the flat. At about 450 metres, we needed to get the camera out for a proper assessment; on first impression, he had us pretty bloody excited. Through the binos, I could see some heavy timber and a fair few points up top. My heart was in my mouth as we



A common sight in Fiordland



When we first spotted the bull from the bush edge

zoomed the camera in - was he going to have that age a Wapiti needs to reach its prime? We counted his points: brows, bays, treys and four up top on each side. A heavy set, perfectly even 14-pointer. The type of animal you dream of seeing, sitting right there within range of Chris's .300 rem ultra mag. After filming, Chris hunt his bull a couple of years earlier, it was my turn behind the trigger

Immediately, we had a few questions about his age. Firstly, he was sitting out in the open an hour before sunset - he wasn't acting like a wise old bull, although that doesn't necessarily mean he's not. In addition his antlers weren't super long, as impressive as they were. We were by no means sold he was a shooter, but we also weren't sold he wasn't.

He stood up and fed behind a patch of scrub. We used the opportunity to push out from the thick bush edge we had been using as cover to get in a better position for a shot and get the tripod setup to steady the camera. He then fed out onto the clearing, crossing it and closing the gap from 450 metres to 250 metres. He had absolutely no idea we were there, so it was a surreal experience watching such an impressive animal go about his day so close to us. We got really excited when he first walked out from the scrub; his neck was sagged out and hanging low. I just about decided he was a shooter there and then.

We carried on watching as he walked out into the open, showing us his full body broadside. The next thing we noticed was how much Red he had in him; this wasn't a pure Wapiti bull. This led me further in the direction of taking him. As he walked into the clearing, we noticed his neck wasn't as saggy as we first thought. With it being late April, he had just been rutting, giving his neck that puffed-out look. The Wapiti Foundation hammer home the idea that a mature Wapiti bull's antlers will be two and a half skull lengths long. The only thing we could guarantee was that this bull's antlers weren't. They looked slightly under two skull lengths, our estimates putting them in that 35-40 inch range. **A true trophy classy Fiordland Wapiti bull will be pushing over the 45-inch length.** That was the key sign that he wasn't at his prime, and when combined with how he held his neck and his behaviour, I decided to leave him. We aged him at six to seven years old, a year or two off his prime.

I couldn't help but feel slightly gutted. This was one hell of an animal, by far the best bull I'd ever seen in person. After six days of working our asses off in tough country, the opportunity was just about given to me on a platter. If I'm being perfectly honest, I would've taken him if I had seen him in any other piece of public land. He would've been my best animal to date and look bloody good on the wall at home. But as happy as I would be in the moment, I know there would be a feeling of guilt when making a ground assessment. I'm sure I would have felt like I had robbed the area knowing that he wasn't at his prime. How many other hunters had looked over this animal and thought 'imagine him in a few more years'. **On top of that, he had the best genetics we had seen in the block; another year of breeding would be great for the area.**

The experience itself outweighed the disappointment that he wasn't a shooter. When I lifted my head from the camera screen the reality of the situation hit home. The bull was right there, going about his day as if we didn't exist. Most hunters will spend their lives in search of an animal like this, and some will never see one. Coming home with the experience of seeing such an animal and footage of it, is a trophy in itself to me.

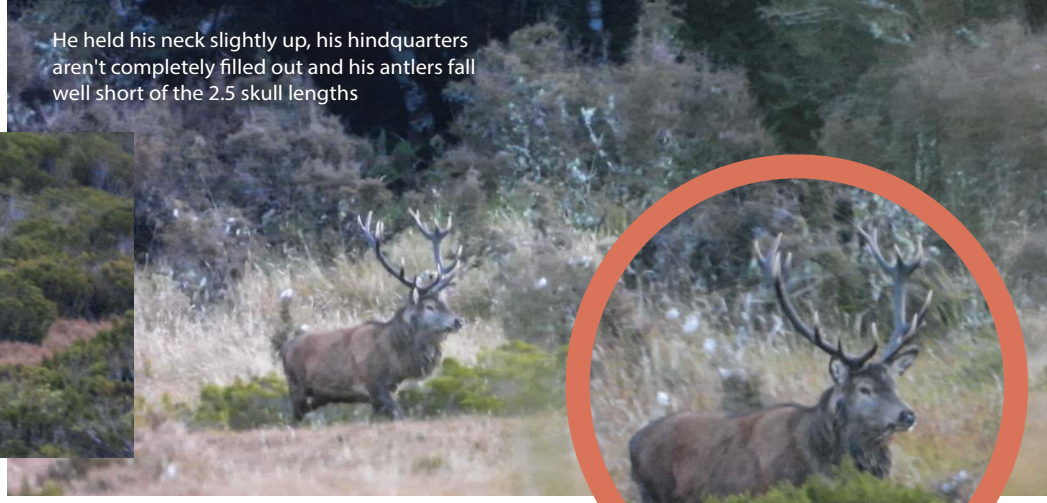
Trophy hunting is a funny old game. Ultimately, it's in the eyes of the beholder as to what defines a trophy. A young spiker is a trophy to someone who hasn't yet shot a deer. To someone who's spent a week pushing their limits in the backcountry, a scrubby 8-pointer might be a trophy in itself. It's not always the big rack of antlers that mean the most. In the end, a trophy isn't the bones hanging on the wall, it's what has been put into it that defines it. The anticipation and adventure, the comradery or the self-driven effort, the places it's taken you and, of course, the hardships along the way. All that being said, I think the Fiordland Wapiti blocks require extra consideration. **If what makes a trophy is what's gone into it, then the bigger picture needs to be considered. The Wapiti herd has had a hell of a lot put into it by generations of hunters.**

With the right management and a combined effort from those lucky enough to hunt the blocks, there's no reason why the area can't produce those once-in-a-lifetime heads. After all, that's what everyone's hoping for when they set off into the blocks.

We still had four days of our ballot left after the bull encounter. Because of our broken tents, we decided to set up a base camp in the valley and get comfortable.



He held his neck slightly up, his hindquarters aren't completely filled out and his antlers fall well short of the 2.5 skull lengths



The next day was rained out and the following day was spent hunting some more clearings, but we only managed to spot a cagey cow on last light. Because we were camped in the valley we were worried our scent had been blowing through the clearings. It had taken us a few days to make our way up the block to our current position, so we decided we would start making our way out a day early. In a flash of false confidence, we moved our water taxi forward to 4pm that day. By the time we finished packing up and I'd had one last look for the 14 for a decent photo it was 10am, giving us six hours to reach Lake Te Anau. We ran into a few distractions along the way: a pair of whio, a couple of cows on a slip and an impressive 10-point Wapiti bull a mere ten metres away in the middle of the river.



Loving life!

The upper reaches of the Mid Burn are cut off by a very serious gorge in the last few kilometres before the lake. You are therefore forced to climb about 300 vertical metres above the river and bush bash your way down to the shore. The ridge we planned on climbing was about a kilometre into the gorged section of the Mid Burn. The travel through this section was painfully slow although the bush was breathtaking. This was the untamed wilderness for which Fiordland is renowned. Thick moss clung to every surface. Tree roots weaved their way beneath our feet, and in some sections, I'm sure we would have been metres above the soil buried below. Near vertical valley walls towered above us on either side. I was starting to get a bit nervous; the surroundings were rather intimidating. At 2pm we realized we hadn't even made it halfway to the lake- we were still in the gorge and there was no way we would make our water taxi. We sent off an embarrassing message on the InReach and carried on down valley. When we finally reached the ridgeline we had spotted on the topo it was obvious we had chosen the right one. There was a well-worn game trail heading directly up it. At 8pm we crawled out onto the rocky shores of Lake Te Anau. It's only fitting that we had underestimated Fiordland for the last time during the trip.

So, this isn't a tale of my trophy of a lifetime. It could have been the story of my best trophy to date, hell maybe even the trophy of my lifetime (hopefully not). Rather, this could be Chapter One of the tale of someone else's trophy of a lifetime. **My only regret is that I didn't try to sneak in close with my camera to take some photos.**



PARD NIGHT VISION

Seriously Illuminating





Long Eye-relief Display System (LEDS)





DS35

- 400m Plus Range
- 100mm Eye Relief
- Focus Free Lens
- Centre Reticle Position
- Circular Screen - Natural view - World First
- 30mm Tube Design
- Ballistics
- Laser Rangefinder

$1599

TD32

NIGHT VISION & THERMAL RIFLE SCOPE

- Combined Thermal and Night Vision
- 400m Plus Range
- 100mm Eye Relief
- Circular Screen -
- 30mm Tube Design
- Ballistics
- Laser Rangefinder

$4299





Talk with the experts

WATCH US ON YOUTUBE youtube.com/@owlopticsandoutdoors

OWLOPTICS.CO.NZ FOR MORE INFORMATION

Distributed & Supported Locally by Owl Optics in Whangarei

OWL OPTICS

PARD NIGHT VISION

Get your

Hands on Night Vision

TA Thermal Laser Rangefinder

HANDHELD MONOCULAR

- Compact Design Tiny, fits in your pocket nicely
- Laser Rangefinder
- 384 or 640 cores - .12u
- Thermal Vision
- 2x, 2.6x and 3.7x Optical Magnification
- Powered by a Single 18650 Battery. Don't rely on fixed internal batteries!

from **$2099**





009

NIGHT VISION HANDHELD

- Compact Design Tiny, fits in your pocket nicely
- In-built IR - 200-300m
- 850nm or 940nm
- 2k Sensor
- Night Vision
- 4.7x Optical Magnification
- 1.5x-3x Digital Zoom

$599

Talk with the experts

WATCH US ON YOUTUBE youtube.com/@owlopticsandoutdoors

OWLOPTICS.CO.NZ FOR MORE INFORMATION

Distributed & Supported Locally by Owl Optics in Whangarei

OWL OPTICS

INTRIGUE 02.424_B_01/24

WRITTEN BY ~ GWYN THURLOW

HUNTING WITH THE TAHR FATHER

"IT LOOKED LIKE IT WOULD PUSH 15 INCHES", SAID THE VOICE ON THE OTHER END OF THE LINE. IT WAS SNOW HEWETSON WHO HAD CALLED ME. HE SAID HE HAD SPOTTED THE BULL TAHR THE PREVIOUS YEAR, WAS PRETTY SURE IT HAD SURVIVED THE RUT AND SHOULD APPEAR AGAIN SEEKING NANNIES. NOW, AS HUNTERS, WE ALL KNOW OF MATES RENOWNED FOR YARNS AND STORIES ABOUT A HUGE TROPHY THEY GLIMPSED THAT ELUDED THEM, BUT SNOW KNOWS HIS TAHR

There are some hunters whose reputations precede them, whose keen eyes and experience have earned them a level of trust and respect among their peers. Snow is one such hunter. When he spoke of this bull tahr, his voice had a certain confidence. And so, when he gave his estimation, I knew it was not to be taken lightly..

I've known Snow for several years. We had first talked about tahr and tahr hunting at a Sika Show on his stand. Years later, I would sit beside him at the High Court in Wellington. He was chair of the Tahr Foundation when the foundation took legal action against the Department of Conservation regarding what we now call the Tahrmageddon saga; I was a month into my new job as Chief Executive Officer at NZDA. It was an exciting time to advocate for hunters and our tahr herd.

It was 2022 Wwen I got the call that led to this hunt. Our country, and all hunters, had spent two years in Covid lockdown suffering travel restrictions. During that period, Snow and I had talked many times. Still, we rarely discussed hunting trips because our conversations were usually focused on advocacy, politics, submissions, and what was happening with the tahr cull. But this time, on our call, he said, "Would you be interested in joining me for a hunting trip?"

Snow continued, "You mentioned wanting to get your father, Peter, a good bull. This might be the right time, as the hunting pressure on the herd is currently low."

"However, I'm not sure how long this will last due to DOC's programme of culling mature bulls and the knock-on impact that will have on hunting pressure for the remaining mature trophy-class heads."

I said I'd get back to him.

We both knew then that the future of our magnificent tahr herd and its mature trophy bull potential was whittling away.

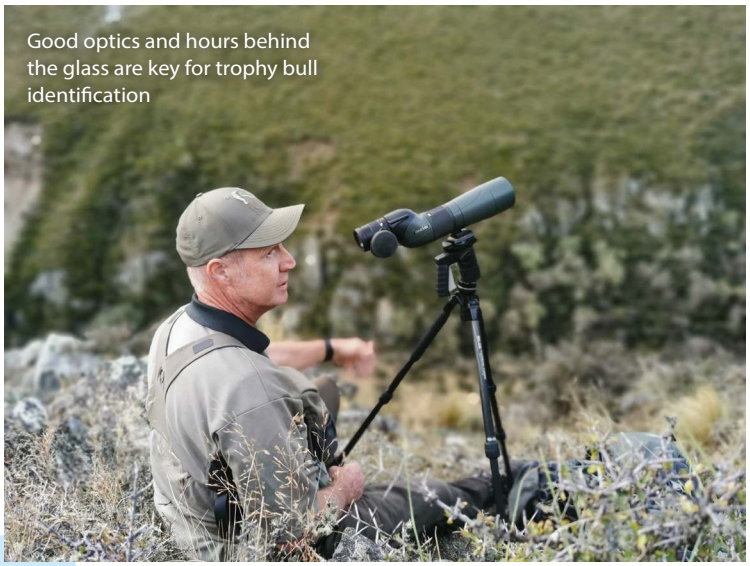
I contacted my dad, and he was keen to join a hunt, jumping at the chance to hunt with Snow. I then asked my brother, Brent, if he had time and wanted to join our trip; he was also keen. Our calendars aligned for a five-day hunt, pre-rut, over the ANZAC long weekend, 25th April.

I called Snow back and let him know.

Snow said, "It's a couple of weeks earlier than ideal. The mature old bulls might not have moved into the area yet". We mulled it over, committed, and decided to meet at Christchurch airport.

Snow drove down from Marlborough, Brent joined from Sydney, and Peter and I, Wellington. We all piled into Snow's Hilux in the airport car park and headed west for





Good optics and hours behind the glass are key for trophy bull identification

the Southern Alps.

We were hunting the East Coast's Rangitata. It's a river catchment in "MU3 (Management Unit) Gammack-Two Thumb" of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993. The Unit comprises famous places and names in tahr hunting lore. Names like Mesopotamia, Erewhon, Macaulay, Godley, Jollie, Havelock, and Bush Stream. It's a place where new and experienced alpine hunters can find their level and secure a tahr. **Many years ago, I shot my first tahr, a nanny, at the head of Two Thumbs Stream under a mountain called The Thumbs.**

The main goal was, first and foremost, to locate a mature bull for Peter, and always in the back of my mind was the potential to see the long-horned bull that Snow had seen.

The country we hunted was classic East Coast tussock terrain: rolling hills punctuated by guts, bluffs, and gorges, all ideal tahr habitats, but all protected by matagouri and speargrass, with their thorny spikes lancing legs and hands at every opportunity.

On our first evening of glassing, we spotted a mob of five sub-adult bulls feeding up high at last light. We spotted no nannies or mature bulls. **A closer look would need to wait until morning, but everyone felt optimistic just seeing tahr.**

That night was spent catching up and swapping stories. The four of us had not spent much time in each other's company recently, and we stayed up much too late for the early start we planned for the morning.

Once on the hill, at first light, we glassed. When tahr hunting, you spend hours behind binoculars and spotting scopes.

We located a mob of nannies with some bulls. A stalk was on. The four of us have spent a lot of time hunting tahr, but the excitement of it never lessens.

After a leg-burning climb, we got into position 300 metres from the mob. The tahr were feeding in a bluffy system. The sun's rays crept over the tops and directly into our eyes, which made seeing challenging. We located the bulls and put the spotter on them in turn. After assessment and much debating, we all agreed one was mature at eight or more years old, but we also decided that the mature bull's horns didn't look in the 13" class. **Both Peter and Brent "ummed" and "ahhed", but in the end, we decided to keep searching.**



Gwyn's bull tahr drenched in early morning light, first spotted over 1km away with nannies

Pushing around the mountain range, we glassed new country without luck.

When setting off late afternoon to return to camp, Peter caught movement high up and along the face, saying, "I think I saw movement". Everyone pulled their binoculars out.

Snow was the first to confirm it was a bull, saying, "Don't move; it's a mature bull; get a spotter on him".

"It's a shooter", a voice whispered.

Peter and Snow crept ahead, hunched over at tussock height. Brent and I held back to avoid adding movement and complicating the situation.

The pair came to a large boulder and crouched down to set up the rifle in range of the bull. **Peter used Snow's rifle, a 7mm Winchester Short Magnum with 162gn projectiles.**

It was a mature lone bull. He was 340 metres away and on a determined quest to find nannies, partly walking, partly running, and fully on a mission.

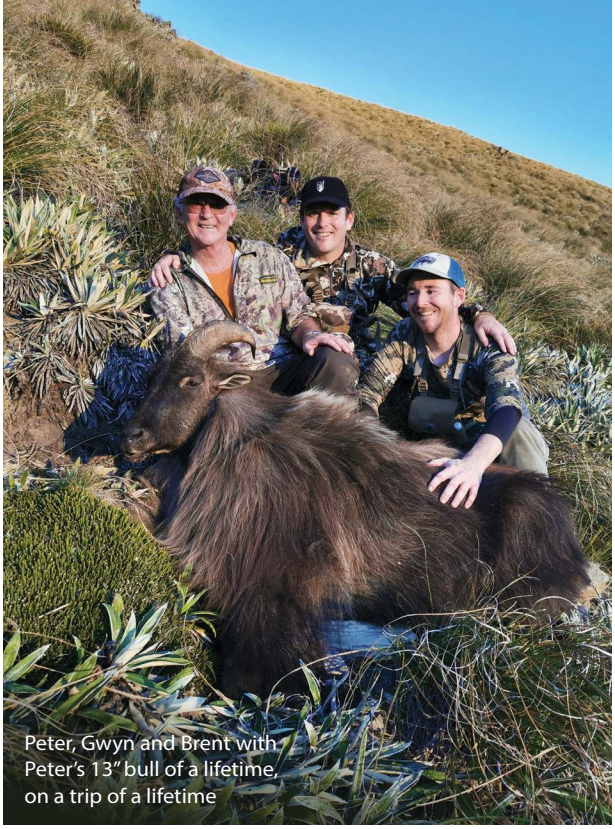
The sound of a shot rolled around the mountain. From my vantage point, I could not see what happened, but I could see that Snow and Peter sprung to their feet to get a different angle. The bull was backtracking at full pace. Peter reloaded, aimed, and shot again. The unmistakable sound of a solid hit could be heard, followed by some whooping and hollering. **The big bull was downed instantly on the second shot.**



Snow Hewetson has been one of NZ's leading tahr advocates, and yet finds time to hit the hills

Darkness was approaching, and we took just a few photos. Then, we all worked our skinning knives as quickly as possible to give us time to get off the mountain's





Peter, Gwyn and Brent with Peter's 13" bull of a lifetime, on a trip of a lifetime



steeper sections in twilight. As it turned out, when we took the head skin off, we saw that both shots hit the vitals next to each other, and the bull was dead on his feet.

Navigating the alpine tops by head torch is not ideal, but that's how we passed the final hour back to camp. Peter did end up taking a tumble in the dark and tweaked his leg. Once back at camp, we pulled out the measuring tape, and Peter's head reached 13" in length with 8 ½" bases. We aged him at 10 ½ years old. It was a trophy bull of a lifetime for Peter.

The following day, we were back out glassing, less Peter, who opted to stay at camp to flesh out his head skin and rest his sore leg.

Snow, Brent, and I spent the early morning behind the glass. We spotted a couple of nanny groups, and just as Snow predicted, they did not have a bull with them due to the timing of our hunt. Their urge to rut was not in full swing. Old bulls seem to have an instinct to hide away, which, I guess, is how they survive year after year without getting shot.

Brent and Snow are very handy behind the glass, so it was with much pride that I called out, spotting the first mature-looking bull, saying, "What's the dark shape way over on that slip?"

Anyone on a hill glassing with hunting companions knows the next five minutes is typically used to describe to the others where the animal is located, and finding an animal on a vast face can be tricky. In recent years, the use of a spotting scope and phone combination shortcuts these issues.

I used my Zeiss range-finding binoculars to try to get a distance to the bull, but I got the "- - -" symbol, which means it was beyond a range of 1,500 metres. This meant we had to cut some distance to better assess the bull.

As we got within 800 metres, we pulled out our spotters again. This confirmed we were looking at a mature, large-bodied bull with two nannies. They were still feeding but would likely move off to bed down for the morning. The tahr were situated with a commanding view of all approaches. We discussed the need to cut down more distance to get a clear look at the bull's hooks, but we all agreed it looked promising at the present range.

We slowly moved around the face and made our way opposite the small mob. At this point, we had not decided or discussed who would be the shooter. I thought Brent would get the first right of refusal because he'd come from Sydney. He'd opted not to shoot 12" class bulls the day prior.

As we stalked closer, we noticed the nannies had stopped feeding and were moving higher up the face and away from us. The bull was mooching in tow. We wondered if they had seen us, but they didn't appear spooked.

We decided to stop and observe the tahr to see what they would do. They continued to a small rocky outcrop and lay down, directly looking our way. **It was now a waiting game because we were pinned down in full view on the opposite tussock face.**

We made the best of the situation and pulled out some snacks and our spotters. The distance between us and the bull was 650 metres. This was when it got exciting because we could all see the hooks clearly, and they looked long.

We discussed the options for making a stalk and decided to play a waiting game. We were fully visible, and any movement would be picked up instantly.

A long time passed, hours, in fact. Tahr can happily bed and chew their cud all day. In the early afternoon, the nannies got up and started to move down the slope. The bull finally decided to join them, and we got a full view of his hooks – a shooter. At this point, Snow got a bit excited and thought we might be looking at the long 14-15" class bull he had seen in the area the year prior. **We ranged the bull at 500 metres, and Brent confessed that, at this point, he was not feeling confident enough to pull off a long shot as he had not spent time behind the rifle.** We all agreed there was no viable option of moving and risk being seen, so our only choice was to hope the tahr would come lower and within our shooting capabilities. Brent would be happy to shoot at a distance of 300 metres, while I thought it could make a 400 metres shot, which would be 50 metres longer than any previous attempt.

More time passed, and the nannies and bull had fed to 450 metres. By then, we'd been alert for hours, and the wind was shifting. The tahr were also moving across the face and towards an impenetrable bluff system that would mean we could not make a recovery.

Snow and I put a little encouraging pressure on Brent to attempt a shot. Brent was firm and said "no", noting that he did



The author's smile says it all, after making a clean hit on the 14" bull at 450m

not want to make a less-than-perfect kill shot. All eyes were then on me to take the option.

"What's the range, again?" I asked.

"Still 450 metres" replied Snow, "I think he could go over 14 inches. It's your call, Gwyn. We can approach from above tomorrow, but there's no guarantee he'll be with those nannies in that same spot because he's moving around before the rut".

"Okay, I'll take the shot", I said.

I had been practising using my 7mm Rem Mag at the rifle range. It's loaded with 150gn Sierra Gamechanger handloads, travelling at 3,050fps. I knew I could get MOA groups at 200 metres, so my rifle would be accurate enough, but would I?

At this point, the bull fed left to right and moved between tussocks.

I adjusted my scope's dial for the range and set up for a shot. I found a very steady rest - rock solid.

"I'm set. I feel good. I'll take the shot when he lifts his head", I commented.

A few tense minutes passed. I nearly pulled the trigger a few times, but my nerves didn't fire. Then, in a moment of stillness, I squeezed the trigger, and the rifle recoiled. The bullet left the barrel.

The bull lurched. The nannies scattered.

Was it a hit? Was it a miss?

We all watched. The bull ran, then slowed, then fell. He had skidded down a scrubby ridge between two guts. He finally came to rest.

A sense of relief overcame me. After the most intense wait, I'd taken my most high-pressure shot in front of my brother and Snow. If I missed it, I would never live it down, but my reputation was intact.

It was mid-afternoon by the time I looked at my watch. Snow thought we didn't have time to recover the tahr and return to camp during daylight, so we all agreed we didn't want another late-night, head torch-fuelled mission. So, we opted to head back to camp and spend the next day making a recovery.

It was a restless night playing over the shot in my head and wondering about the bull.

The next day, we recovered my bull, reaching him at midday. I was too nervous to lift his head and kept a wide berth. Snow did the honours, revealing its longest horn at 14 7/8 inches.

I decided to take the full-body skin to give me an option of a life-sized mount. Brent, Snow and I all made quick work of caping the whole body.

That evening back at camp, as the sun dipped behind the mountains, casting long shadows over the valley, we gathered around the bulls we had secured, a mix of exhaustion and satisfaction on our faces. **The pair of bulls' impressive horns, now in our hands, would always be a tangible reminder of our adventure, of the good moments and the tough ones, all shared against the backdrop of this rugged terrain.**

Tomorrow, we'd pack up and head back to civilisation, leaving the quiet of the mountains behind but taking with us memories that would last a lifetime. This hunt was a chapter in our lives we'd never forget, filled with laughter, challenges, and the kind of satisfaction you only get from pushing yourself to new limits. I hope that for generations to come, fathers and sons can hunt our majestic bull tahr in the Southern Alps – a special and unique opportunity we must fight to protect. Our Himalayan tahr herd is a "herd of special interest to hunters", that I don't doubt.

If you haven't already done so, I highly recommend joining and supporting organisations such as the Tahr Foundation and NZDA. These groups consist of honest and hardworking individuals who work tirelessly in the best interests of hunters. **Having worked alongside people like Snow and many others like him, I know first-hand that they require our support.**

SPIKA

SPIKA.CO.NZ

[TECHNICAL DESIGN, DURABILITY + LONGEVITY AS STANDARD]

30,000MM
WATERPROOF & BREATHABLE



LIGHTWEIGHT & PACKABLE
DURABLE FABRIC

CHECK OUT SPIKA'S NEW:

CLOTHING RANGE

DESIGNED AND TESTED IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND'S HARSH CONDITIONS, THE NEW RANGE OF SPIKA CLOTHING BRINGS QUALITY, COMFORT AND TECHNICAL DESIGN SO YOU CAN #GETOUTSIDE.

EDGE JACKET

30,000mm WATERPROOF & BREATHABLE

$399.99 | Available in Biarri Camo + Olive

#Get Outside

SPARTAN

PRECISION EQUIPMENT

WEIGHT

215 g



JAVELIN BIPOD

Frustrated with heavy equipment, we combined the lightest and strongest materials available to create a bipod that goes on the rifle when you need it and comes off when you don't.

HEIGHT

17.8cm - 22.8cm

javelinbipod.com

@spartanprecision

WRITTEN BY | HANNAH RAE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY | VICTORIA SHERIDAN

WĀHINE AND WAPITI



NO ONE RETURNS FROM FIORDLAND UNCHANGED. WHETHER IT'S CHERISHED TIME WITH GREAT MATES, EXHILARATING ADVENTURES OR HUMBLING MISADVENTURES, OR BEING AWESTRUCK BY THE GRANDEUR OF THIS UNTOUCHED WILDERNESS, FIORDLAND LEAVES AN INDELIBLE MARK.

Back in December 2023, after being unsuccessful in my application for the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation (FWF) Wāhine and Wapiti experience led by the Foundation's General Manager, Roy Sloan, I channelled my enthusiasm into other mountain adventures over the summer.

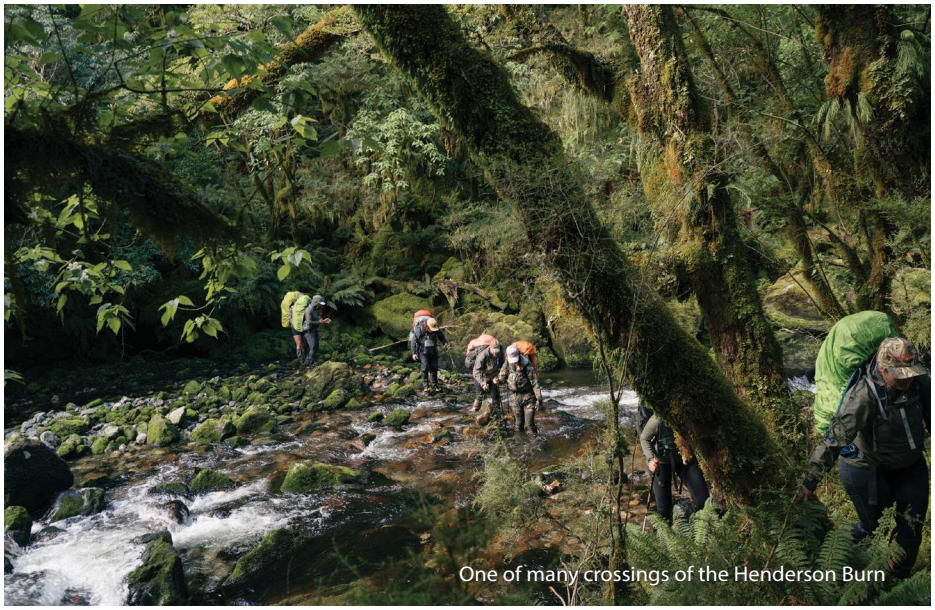
But three weeks before the trip's departure, I received an unexpected email from Britt Davies, the FWF's female advocate and co-organiser of this experience, offering me a spot due to last-minute cancellations. My immediate response, without even looking at my calendar, was "yes absolutely!" It was a privilege to be called up from the reserves.

As Britt later explained to me, the purpose of this five-day trip into Fiordland was to create an inclusive environment where women of all backgrounds can connect through nature, hunting and conservation. Our group consisted of huge diversity in age, stage of life, hunting and outdoor experience.

"It's about going beyond the Foundation and building connections," Britt said. "We wanted to offer this opportunity to experience the Wapiti area beyond entering the ballot. There's so much pressure, intensity and preparation around going in for ten days, it's a huge commitment, especially if you're new to this. How else can you experience it that feels less intimidating?" The only requirements for this trip were being able to get yourself to and from Te Anau, have a true sense of adventure and bring an open mind.



Lunchtime clearing - soaking in the Fiordland experience



One of many crossings of the Henderson Burn

Boating across to Glaisnock from Te Anau Downs, we entered the North Fiord with the mountaintops shrouded in lingering cloud and waterfalls tumbling down the slopes fed by the previous night's heavy rainfall. Navigating through the Narrows, the beech-laden hillsides squeezed in around us, I had to pinch myself. I'd never been successful in the ballot before, and the inhospitable winter conditions had so far dissuaded me from organising a Fiordland trip after the ballot period. It seemed surreal to be entering the Wapiti area on a FWF-led trip when the block was closed to hunters. To me, it demonstrated the Foundation's proactive approach to education and conservation in offering this experience.

After disembarking at Glaisnock Hut, Roy gave us a frank briefing about safety and expectations, and we were off. There is a trapline and clear track that runs alongside the Glaisnock River, but owing to Roy's aversion to marked, well-trodden tracks, he struck off into the bush with nine women in tow. From what I'd gathered we would be following a hunter's trail up to the Henderson Burn, but it wasn't long before it felt like we'd deviated from said trail, instead negotiating bog holes and horizontal tree trunks. A couple of hours later we arrived at the junction of the Henderson Burn and Glaisnock at dusk and scurried to set up camp on spots flat enough for five tents.

The next morning, lured by promises of stunning waterfalls, we began our clamber and bushbash up the Henderson Burn. It started to feel like we were truly entering Fiordland; wading through the ferns dappled by sunlight sneaking through the canopy, and weaving around lichen-draped branches. I found that moving through the bush was a marvellous overstimulation of green, all shades and hues. We encountered a couple of Wapiti in the bush that morning, though only seen by a handful of folks at the front. **The animals quickly decided they weren't sticking around to find out that our merry band was only there to look.**

Stopping for lunch in a sunny clearing by the creek, we interrupted a pair of whio enjoying the calm of a slow-moving pool. As well as an opportunity to refuel, and to dry out gear, feet and sweaty t-shirts, it was our first chance to sit down in daylight and truly soak in the Fiordland experience. It was also our first opportunity to have a conversation that wasn't on the move. I love a bit of banter but I'm woeful at small talk, usually preferring to get to the real meat and potatoes of a topic. Once we'd sat down, over snacks and a cuppa, that's exactly what we did. Having been called in at the last-minute, I hadn't had the time to set any expectations, but as we packed up and left the clearing, I realised I was fizzing simply to have the opportunity to spend all this time outdoors with incredible, like-minded women.

We spent that night and the next camping in a clearing next to the Henderson Burn, the walls of the glacier-carved valley rising sharply above. Between mouthfuls of dinner on our first night there, I gazed up at the ledges and faces above, mostly just to take it all in. We'd been making a fair few decibels setting up camp, the kind of level you'd expect from a group of ten whose primary objective is not hunting - I didn't expect to see any animals. But having been introduced to hunting five years ago, and having been on countless missions since, keeping an eye out for movement is now hard-wired into my brain. My eyes were drawn to some likely-looking spots - up high, with feed, and a prick of a place to get to. It was in one of these spots I saw a caramel blob that appeared to be on the move. Hurriedly, I dredged my binos from my pack and there, on the other end of the glass, was a beautiful Wapiti bull thrashing his antlers around in the scrub.

It was an unexpected surreal moment. I'd seen some nice Red stags through my binos before, but this bull was entirely on another level. I watched, silently fixated. There's only one first time seeing a Wapiti bull and I wanted to savour it.

"Roy, I've got one!" I said, finally taking a breath. He looked over with an expression I couldn't tell if it was disbelief, bemusement, or delight. **Probably a combination of all three.** Then ensued the sometimes hilarious, sometimes frustrating ritual of target indication as we attempted to get all nine other pairs of eyes onto this caramel blob. See that rock face there? Follow the ridgeline up, just below that second-highest peak. Sidle around that contour, above those big stripy rocks.

I'll candidly admit that for several years I wasn't quite sure what the FWF did beyond running the Wapiti ballot. Even for those fortunate enough to have experienced the Wapiti blocks, many probably remain unaware of what goes on behind the scenes. It wasn't until getting involved with the Winter Wapiti Weekend in Te Anau, watching the FWF 'Beyond the Odds' documentary, joining this Wāhine and Wapiti experience, and hearing Roy share his perspective that I gained an entirely new respect and appreciation for what they do.

The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation is far more than just a group of hunters organising a ballot. While the Wapiti ballot itself is a fantastic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for recreational hunters, it also serves as a mechanism and funding source for their much larger goals and ambitions. The scale of their vision extends far beyond what any of us average hunters would dare to imagine!

The next day, daypacks loaded, we



Roy says the bull I spotted is a bit of a mythical creature. He has been glimpsed in previous ballots, but this photo from Kody Hunt is the only evidence

continued venturing up the valley, aiming to enjoy our picnic lunch atop a waterfall. Along the way, we came across another pair of whio - probably those whose whistles and growls I'd fallen asleep to the night before. We also spotted more Wapiti bulls, even getting to watch an encounter between two bulls while we ate our lunch, tucked against the snow tussocks. **It wasn't until after the trip that a conversation with Roy revealed just how remarkable our wildlife encounters had been.**

"Wapiti are some of the spookiest deer I know," he said. "Once you spook them, once they smell you, you'll never see them again. They take one look at you and they're gone. But for some crazy reason on this trip, we had deer standing all around us like I've never seen before." We'd been lucky enough to experience a little bit of Fiordland magic.

On our return down the Henderson Burn, Roy stopped us in the bush to point out telltale signs of kiwi - scratchings in the dirt with beak holes where the elusive birds had been foraging for insects underground. Some of us were sceptical. That's something I really enjoyed about spending time with Roy; often I couldn't be sure if he was being serious, taking the mickey, or leading us to believe some tall tale. It could have just as easily been boot scrapings and pole marks creating that "evidence."

But our doubts were quickly quelled when, just as we began moving again, a kerfuffle of surprise and incredulity arose from further up the line. Our travelling caravan had indeed, inadvertently, disturbed a real live kiwi that disappeared off into the undergrowth, brushing past Britt's leg in its hasty dash to safety.

With heavy rain forecast we pushed onwards to the Glaisnock hut for the final night, the promise of a solid roof overhead and dry gear providing great incentive. Going to sleep with the drumming of rain on the roof is always a cosy feeling. We spent the next day grazing on snacks, sipping hot drinks, and swapping stories, awaiting our 6pm boat pickup back to civilization.

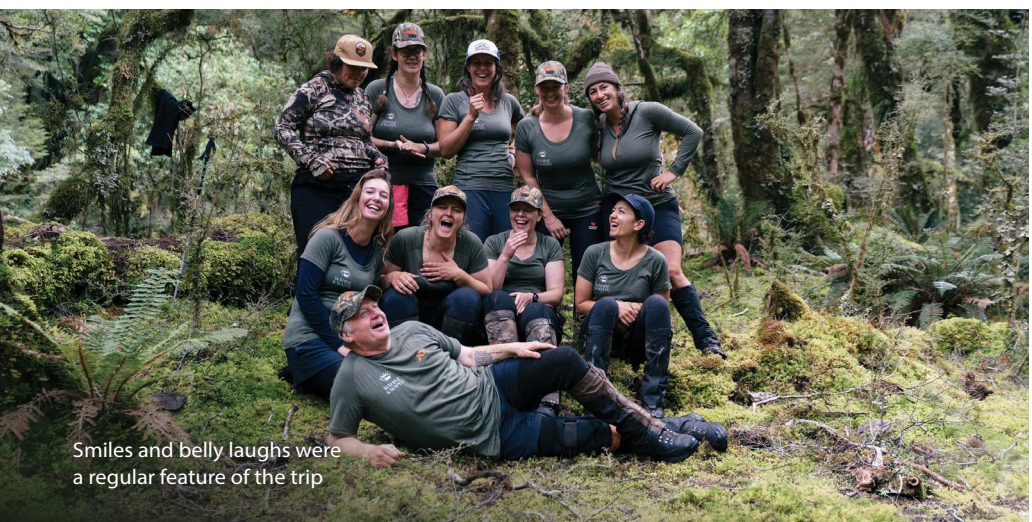
As a writer, it's my job to find words that accurately portray my experiences, but when I reflect on the amazing women I met on the trip I can't seem to find the right combination of words to convey the depth and breadth of our time together. I lost count of the belly laughs, and the moments where I noticed that these people and this environment were bringing out the best version of me. Their stories are theirs to share, but I will share that I was moved to tears more than once over those five days. Stories of hardship, life gone sideways and enormous challenges, but also incredible grit and strength, cultivating hope, and wisdom gained through living.

On the drive back to Te Anau from the boat drop-off at Te Anau Downs, striking beams of sunlight streaked through the parting storm clouds, spilling light onto the western waters of Lake Te Anau. I remarked on the ethereal "Jesus light" effect, and Roy nodded, "Yeah, whenever that happens I feel like it's Fiordland calling me back already."

His words rang true. I'd finally discovered for myself the sentiment I'd heard countless times - that this place gets under your skin. Before we'd even left Glasinock on the boat that day I was planning on heading back out there.

A huge thank you to Roy, our superb tour guide, for allowing us all to cultivate confidence in ourselves and for his patience in thoughtfully answering all of our questions! Thanks also to Britt and the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation for making this experience possible, and to the sponsors Backcountry, Dog and Gun, and First Lite for their support.

Keen to get involved? Britt shared with me a sneak peek at what's brewing behind the scenes - it's exciting and inspiring stuff. **Keep an eye on the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Facebook page for updates about more events and opportunities like this.**



Smiles and belly laughs were a regular feature of the trip

WAPITI FACTS

Through a community management agreement signed by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and the NZ Government the Foundation manages the Wapiti herd in a 175,000 hectare zone called the Wapiti area (about 15% of the total area of Fiordland National Park). In its 20+ years of operations the Foundation has never received funding from the government for deer control within the Wapiti area, ie. recreational hunters fully fund this management.

The herd is managed through selective aerial culling. Unlike other areas where aerial culling is implemented as the main herd management strategy, 60% of the animals shot in the Wapiti area are processed and eaten in NZ restaurants with a strategy in place to increase that to 100% by 2025.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Foundation harvested and processed several hundred Wapiti, and sent 17 tonnes of Wapiti mince to food banks around the country.

The Wapiti area is rated No 86 on the priority list for DOC. So DOC has 85 areas more important than the Wapiti area. The Wapiti area is the number 1 priority area for the FWF.

FWF volunteers trap predators in five separate river catchments in the Wapiti area of the Fiordland National Park. These trap lines are in some of the most inhospitable places on earth, with eight metres of rain annually, and plenty of wind and snow. The area is also surrounded by water. Maintaining the 600 traps the FWF has in place is an expensive logistical challenge.

MAXXIS®

FORGE NEW PATHS.



Blaze a Trail There. And Back.

When it's time to head out there, the Razr is the perfect choice. Stone ejectors, Debri-shield sidewalls and a special anti-chunk-and-tear compound combine with the Armour Ply, a reinforcement layer that runs under the tread and sidewalls to make them stubbornly resistant to punctures and damage, even in the harshest of conditions. So you can rely on the Razr to get you out there, and back.

Ready to go somewhere new?



MAXXIS®
RAZR

maxxistyres.co.nz | 0800 629 947



Overlooking the Nina River, Lake Sumner RHA

SUB-SEVEN ADVENTURES

ALWAYS GETTING READY

WRITTEN BY - GREIG CAIGOU

I recently set out on a three-day alpine hunting trip with all my gear weighing less than seven kilograms. This included everything from my pack, food, clothes, shelter, sleep system, first aid kit, electronics, and hunting gear (excluding the rifle)

Why?

Because I could, and because I wanted to challenge myself and push the fringes of what was workable and safe as part of my journey toward a lighter approach to hunting.

So here are some thoughts, a bit of the storyline of that hunt, and what's in it for you - all part of adventures for New Zealand hunters and celebrated in this 100th issue of the magazine.

Peter Ryan's excellent book "Hunting Moments" recounts a Yup'ik hunter's story from a community with a long history of fishing and hunting traditions. These people live in Alaska and across the roof of the world into Siberia.

Peter tells how they have words for ideas that we cannot express simply, such as their word "upterrlainarluta" which carries the idea of 'always getting ready', where every moment is about getting ready for the next. For example, in our context, we can appreciate how a farmer's or a gardener's work flows from one season to another, getting ready for the next phase of the upcoming season. I see parallels for us as hunters.

Part of my ethos of always getting ready is striving to increase my physical and mental capacity. Exploring lighter or more versatile alternatives is integral to that.

We already know a lot about why we hunt. One study in the USA revealed that many hunters move through 'stages' during the lifetime of their hunting experiences. One stage might be the 'trophy stage' where "hunters believe selectivity is of paramount importance, passing up what they considered animals of lesser value". Here the hunt is all about size, symmetries, or age. (You can read a full look at this study way back in an article I wrote for Issue 23 in 2011.)

Another stage is where the hunter's focus is "where hunters invest heavily in equipment and discover pleasure in how the hunting is done."

I don't believe all this is necessarily summed up in a 'step-by-step progression', say from some beginner stage to some more advanced master class of hunter. Sadly, that would just lend itself to more posturing amongst hunters.

'Meat-hunter' or 'trophy-hunter' labels just don't explain or define our reasons for being in the hills with a rifle or bow. I suppose though, if there was a label, then I am altogether an 'adventure' hunter! And this solo hunt would be an adventure in terms of what can I manage safely.

So, at 'Sub-7', I took off into the RHA area at Lewis Pass with the goal of revisiting a loop undertaken 50 years previously on my first solo hunt as a 17-year-old. Back then, it was also adventure that lured me into the backcountry. I remember the mountains seemed waaay bigger and challenging, and the journey longer, whereas I now consider this easy country.

The first leg of the trip was up a main valley, and the combination of lightweight gear and trail shoes meant I halved the time given on the DOC signboard. I'd decided to walk in on the



PACK BASE WEIGHT + HUNT GEAR + CONSUMABLES	GRAMS
Pack - SouthernLite 35L *(with hipbelt, sternum strap & rifle dropper)*	**454**
Shelter - MYOG Dyneema tarp with pegs *(2 person)*	**431**
Walking pole - Black Diamond *(Distance FLZ)* - also needed for pitching tarp	**240**
Sleeping bag and liner - MacPac *(Quilt style, Down on topside)*	**785**
Pad (Neo Air)	**360**
Clothing	
Rain jacket - North Face, 40D Hy Vent & merino beanie	**358**
Overtrousers - Outdoor Research Helium pants *(sometimes heavier EarthSeaSky Vent-X overtrousers @390gr)*	**150**
Insulation layer - Rab puffy *(synthetic)*	**362**
Windshirt - OMM	**47**
Spare clothing in drybag *(merino top and bottom)*	**334**
Gear	
Binos - Leupold Cascades *(10x42)*	**655**
Headlamp - LED Lenser	**91**
First Aid kit	**186**
PLB	**227**
Knife *(Mercator)*, steel, hearing protection & muslin bags	**128**
Powerbank & cables	**184**
Mini tripod for photography	**164**
iPhone - camera, map app. & GPS	**196**
Cooking	
Can stove, cup, spork, fuel for 3 davs	**267**
Food *(meals, snacks etc. 3 days)*	**1324**
TOTAL with consumables	**6943**

tail of a storm, to be amongst hunting country when the weather cleared, and I left the State Highway later in the afternoon to miss the worst of the downpour. After 'fastpacking' up the valley, I turned up the track headed for the bushline. **Arriving on the tops in the 'magic hour' is normally productive for spotting animals, but the wind was howling up the gully and it was cold and squally.** The weather had deteriorated, and the clearance was obviously not coming as quickly as forecast. Rather than pitch my fly I opted for the small hut set further up in a low alpine saddle.

Through the night the biv vibrated as gusty squalls came through, and I awoke to the same cold, wet, and blustery conditions, with low clag whistling up through the saddle and all around the mountainsides. I climbed back into my sleeping bag and hunkered down spending half a day drinking tea, reading everything left in the hut and peeing into a plastic container rather than fighting the door to get outside and get soaked.

By late afternoon, I was bored. It had stopped raining, and the clag had lifted enough to see around the bushline. I headed out to stretch my legs with an evening hunt. Climbing high, I sidled around above the main valley and took a few selfies as the evening sun started to pierce through lifting clouds, highlighting the tops out to the East. Surely animals would be out and about, joining me with the improving weather!

I smelt them before I saw them, and in the next gulch, I managed to pick up seven deer in a couple of groups as they made their way out from the treeline and upwards toward feeding grounds. There might even have been unseen deer below me as the still-strong wind kept bringing scent around to me. It was neat to watch the animals and be entertained by juvenile kea who came visiting for a peck at my shoes, gaiters, and anything else I had that was interesting. They are such gear freaks!

I enjoyed being on these tops, travelling light, looking over the country and hunting, but no big chamois were identified, so the plan for the last day was to retrace the route out along the ridgelines from all those years back, reminiscing with each step.

At first light, I already had enough altitude to investigate a small basin where three hinds were feeding. I kept working the glass as the sunlight touched the peaks and started to creep its way down the western slopes, promising a brilliant day. I love that morning glow on the tips of peaks, as the low angle of the sun gives a more fully saturated colour and a 'feel alive' connection to the rhythms of nature.

It was decision time. Do I kill one of these 'good-eaters' here, now, or wait until closer to the road-end? I figured with it being the weekend and a fine one at that, there may well be plenty of hunters in the area, disturbing the country I was travelling back through, so I opted to take one of the hinds.

The superlight 35-litre pack had managed to accommodate all my gear for the 'Sub 7' hunt and these roll-top packs are great because you can compress your gear down to give a low and compact profile, but then unroll to provide the space for meat. **As the photo shows, I knew I had 15 centimetres of pack space to fit meat inside.** If needed, I could provide more space by clipping one or two of my waterproof seal bags to the outside of the pack, although I prefer to have nothing dangling and the only thing I'd entertain tying to the exterior would have been antlers from an old Imperial 14-point Red stag!!

Skirting up high above the feeding hinds I was able to cut the range to 500 metres. I love stalking, more than shooting, so the next phase meant a scramble down and around through contours, moving from



I revisited this biv after 50 years absence. It sits in the saddle but an older version sat down near the creek at the edge of the bush



Shoot more hinds, especially young ones like this which are great eating

one depression or rock outcrop to the next, to cut the range. I was also looking for a spot where I could put away a good shot. Sometimes getting closer needs to be compromised with the best situation for making a good shot. **Laying over rocks in a contorted position doesn't work well for my accuracy.**

At around 250 metres I had a good spot that I could lay over, using the pack as rifle support. I don't carry a bipod. All three young animals fed out of sight into a small depression which gave me time to settle my breathing and wait for the right moment. When they reappeared, I squeezed off on the one that was most broadside, knocking her to the ground and causing all sorts of commotion down in the basin.

The other two hinds ran about 50 metres and then stomped around, turning their heads this way and that, trying to figure out where the noise had come from and where their mate was. The 7mm Rem Mag sure does cause quite a stir. I've noticed with the muzzle brake that deer are somewhat confused where the sound comes from, but hear it for sure! (This time, I'd also heard it, loudly, having forgotten to put my ear plugs in).

I watched the whole scene for several minutes and the animals didn't move far, only high-tailing it when I stood up.

Down at the animal, I set to butchering and repacking. Once cooled, I got the boned-out meat into the bottom of the pack, realizing I was only one basin around from where I had shot my first deer some 50 years earlier. I had slept under the stars on black poly and had carried out four legs, bone-and-all, in my cavernous Mountain Mule pack! The 'epic' of lugging all that weight off the tops made its point on the younger version of myself, and I never carried bone again!

One thing is that with so many deer around and needing to cull more hinds I have altered somewhat in my personal 'creed' as a hunter. My Dad taught me to take all the meat, and not waste any, and in days gone by I've basically left nothing but skeleton on the high hills. I don't think Dad would turn in his grave knowing I just take the meat from back legs, backstraps and eye fillets nowadays.

This all went into the little pack as along with my gear and got hauled out along ridgelines that linked up to an old track down off the tops, leading out the valley to the roadside. Travel in lightweight, come out heavy eh!

On the way, I stumbled upon the precise location where I had taken my first chamois on my initial solo trip fifty years ago, and also spotted more game. Back then, I scrambled around a high point and heard a whistle from a rock garden about 100 metres below me. Sprawling across the jagged rocks I had worked the bolt on the sporterised .303 and shot the chamois ,full of as much adrenaline as any newbie hunter could be! The memorable 6" trophy horns came home from that trip too, and it never crossed my mind that young chamois meat was delicious - I naively thought you just shot them for their horns!

Things have changed, and amongst the changes has been my harkening back to solo hunts, adventures with no frills. My 'Sub-Seven' challenge had proven to me that I had efficient gear to take on alpine conditions, and to travel safely (regardless of the luxury of a hut in the peak of the storm.) My gear allowance and food choices also meant I had room for the meat that I wanted to bring home.

Modern, ultralight packs are now being made by a growing cottage industry right here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Mine was bespoke made by SouthernLite, and uses Ultra 200 with no frame stays or extra pockets, on a minimalistic harness. Because it weighs just 300 grams, it also doubles as my trail running pack.

I had a rifle dropper added and had my pack deliberately made in white to 'make a point' that camo or earthy tones are not critical for staying undetected by wild animals. I've long held that other than



Gear freaks. Love them, or not . . . but they are an attractive bird



I love using this Dyneema tarp. So versatile, and able to be pitched as an enclosed configuration for weathering storms

smell, movement is the main give-away of hunters to wild animals – if you know, you know!

Modern pack fabrics are different to those in the past - so what is "Ultra" Fabric and why all the hype?

UltraWeave (Ultra) fabric is made with high-density molecular-weight polyethylene fibres, or UHMWPE and is manufactured by Challenge Sailcloth in various thicknesses, with Ultra 200 and 400 being the most common application for backpacks. The fabric is extremely lightweight, highly water and tear resistant as well as being UV resistant and tremendously durable with almost double the abrasion resistance of found on typical hunting packs Made with 500d Cordura.

Going even smaller using this pack for my 'Sub-7' challenge meant I was forced to pack thoughtfully, using the gear inside as the 'frame'. I'd usually recommend those wanting to go ultralight to buy their pack last, once they've streamlined their kit and know exactly what's going inside. Pack size is a factor in going lighter though, because otherwise there is a tendency to fill whatever space is available.

If you've got money to invest in going lighter then perhaps also look into an Ultra TNT ('tent and tarp' fabric) design, which would give you a bombproof double-wall tent down into the lower weights currently being enjoyed by those of us using Dyneema tarps.

So, with this sort of challenge, what's in it for you?

The importance of lowering your base weight includes reducing physical strain, and a lighter approach makes longer hunts more manageable, reducing fatigue on your body (which means you will have 'more in the tank' when really needed). By carrying a lighter load, you can venture deeper into terrain and enjoy your surroundings with less weariness of hauling up hills. Discovering your limits during a hunt is where adventure often happens, making it beneficial to set your own challenges with your gear and systems.



The riches of carrying out wild protein from the point where I shot my first chamois 50 years earlier

If you accomplish new 'stretch', new feats, you gain insight. You gain knowledge and experience, and train for further exploits. This is why I see HUNTS course participants experiencing overnights sheltered in their survival gear. This is "upterrlainarluta".

You could go on hunts with runners and a space blanket, or you could go out with full mountaineering setup and a 90L pack - choose your own adventure. It's all personal preference and shouldn't everyone's sense of adventure be defined by themselves?

Going into the wilderness ultralight is not just about speed or being more nimble; it should be about the experience, and I find less gear more raw and 'connective'.

But lightweight gear is not unsafe, and lightweight outdoors people are not necessarily unprepared. **There's a difference between being UL and prepared or not being prepared to survive.** You can't play 'Russian roulette' with our harsh mountain environments and expect to put more load on emergency services, and yet, it's healthy for us to push limits. Nothing ventured,nothing gained.

So, that's my current experiment. Sub-seven for three-season alpine hunts. What's your current 'stretch' look like?

Or maybe, like me, you just enjoy exploring lighter or simpler alternatives and more versatile options, testing on brief trips to assess what performs best, and what you can manage safely, which is all part of "always getting ready".

Now all I've got to do is learn how to say *upterrlainarluta*.

BACKLANZ®

THE ULTIMATE HUNTING BIPOD

- NO MODIFICATION DO IT YOURSELF INSTALLATION
- DETACHABLE AT THE PUSH OF A BUTTON
- ULTRA-LIGHTWEIGHT STARTING AT 127G
- MULTIPLE LEG ADJUSTMENT OPTIONS AND SIZES
- NEW ZEALAND MADE TITANIUM CARBON FIBRE CONSTRUCTION



CHECK THE RANGE OUT AT
WWW.BACKLANZ.CO.NZ

INTRIGUE 02403- 07/23 NZH

FENIX
LIGHTING FOR EXTREMES



BATTERIES INCLUDED
INTELLIGENT MEMORY
RED LED
GREEN LED
STROBE

HT32 2500 lumens
Long-range hunting flashlight!

• 640m max beam distance • Nine light modes • Red and green LED's for preserving night vision and not spooking prey
• ARB-L21-5000 USB rechargeable 21700 Li-ion battery
• IP68 rated for water & dust • **Weight:** 185g (excluding battery)
• **Dimensions:** 160mm length x 52mm diameter head and 25.4mm diameter body • **Maximum runtime:** 29 hours

RRP $ 349.95

Also available:
Remote Pressure Switch
AER-05



Specialized for tactical flashlights with APF circuits
• Allows quick selection between two modes: Strobe and Turbo (the brightest)
• 23cm cable length
• IP68 rated for water & dust

RRP $ 39.95

See your local outdoor retailer for all available Fenix products.
For more product information go to: www.mountainadventure.co.nz



WWW.SWAZI.CO.NZ

Celebrating 30 years of SWAZI® NEW ZEALAND



Better Hunting Aotearoa

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR MAPS

Better Hunting is a free online training platform built by the Game Animal Council to help hunters upskill and hunt safely and successfully

The programme is also intended to provide a pathway and support hunters going on to do practical training, such as through NZDA's HUNTS courses.

The platform has tonnes of content all designed by New Zealand hunters for New Zealand hunters. You can do it on your phone and even download the courses for offline viewing using the app.

For new, inexperienced and casual hunters, the two main courses, Hunting Essentials and Firearm Essentials, cover basic hunting and outdoor skills. More experienced hunters will still find useful information throughout many of the modules, in the maps, forecasts, hunting and ballot calendars, intentions form or games. Each module has a short quiz and there are assessments you can do to ensure your knowledge is up to date.

Visit our website to check it out. If you enjoy using it, please share it around.

BETTERHUNTING.NZ

Most hunters and outdoors people have basic map skills. But there's so much depth we can add to our hunting through closer inspection of what a map is telling us

There are three main aspects of map use that assist our hunting:

1. **Navigation**
2. **Communicating locations**
3. **Providing us clues as to where animals may be**

Better Hunting's 'Using Maps' module primarily looks at 1 and 2. For more on 3 have a look at the 'How to hunt' module.

NAVIGATION – DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

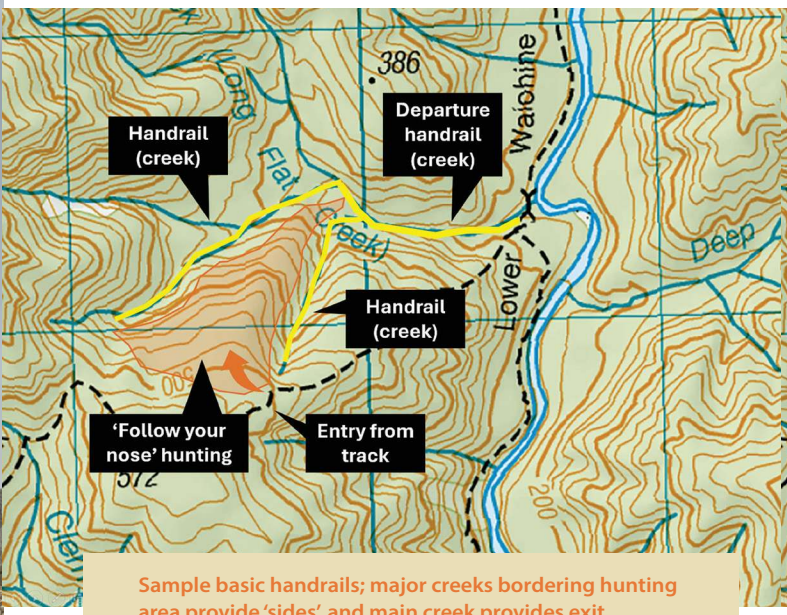
While following a track is pretty straightforward, we're not permitted to hunt from tracks on Public Conservation Land (PCL), and tracks are simply not where animals are most likely to be. Getting comfortable with navigating off-track is therefore essential to becoming a safe and successful hunter, and good map reading is critical to this.

A good hunter keeps their eyes and ears alert. Re-focussing to check your smartphone or map every ten steps is not a satisfying or effective way to hunt. To free yourself of this it is a good idea to do your homework and study the map before you head into the hills.

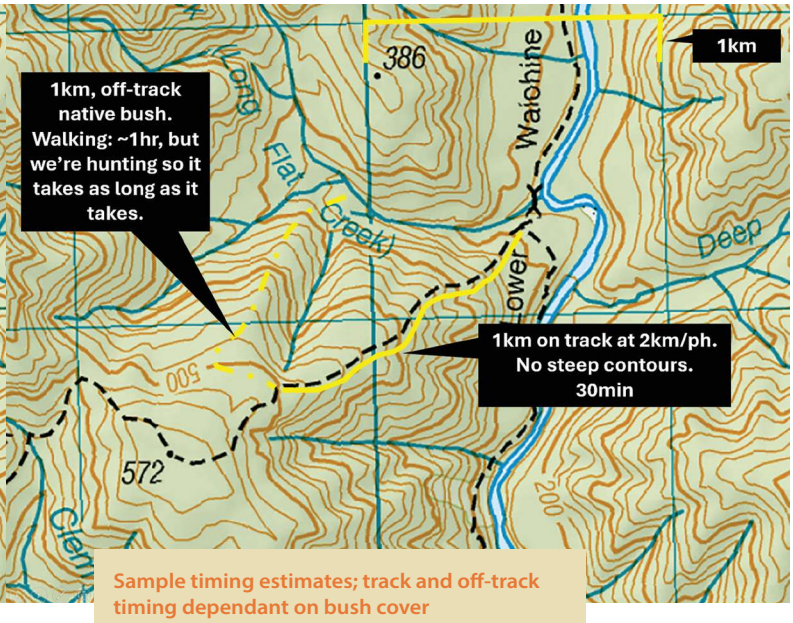
IDENTIFY PROSPECTIVE HANDRAILS

Handrails are land features you can use to guide your route. In New Zealand these are generally streams, spurs, ridges, fence lines, tracks and roads. We strongly encourage you to study prospective handrails while you are getting ready for your hunt, donning your blaze and putting cartridges in your magazine. It may feel cheesy initially but it's a good thing to do with any mates you are hunting with too, as this will significantly help your navigation and communication.

If you know your handrails, you can stay aware of the area you are in without constantly referring to your map. This means you can keep your mind on the task of hunting.



Sample basic handrails; major creeks bordering hunting area provide 'sides', and main creek provides exit



Sample timing estimates; track and off-track timing dependant on bush cover

ESTIMATING TRAVEL TIMES

Correctly estimating off track travel times is not easy, but it can really help with your hunt planning. The side benefit of estimating travel timing is that it helps you focus attention on every little map feature. Even if your estimates are initially not that accurate, you really get familiar with the landscape you're visiting, and that helps speed good decision making in the field.

To estimate travel times, general walking speed estimates are:

- A road or great-walk quality track: 4km/per hour
- A normal track: 2km/per hour
- Off track: 0.5-1km/per hour

Not all off-track travel is equal, of course. You might do 2km/per hour in open beech forest, but in thick vegetation it'll be more like 0.5 or 1km/per hour. If you're hunting while you move, it's obviously different again depending on how you are hunting.

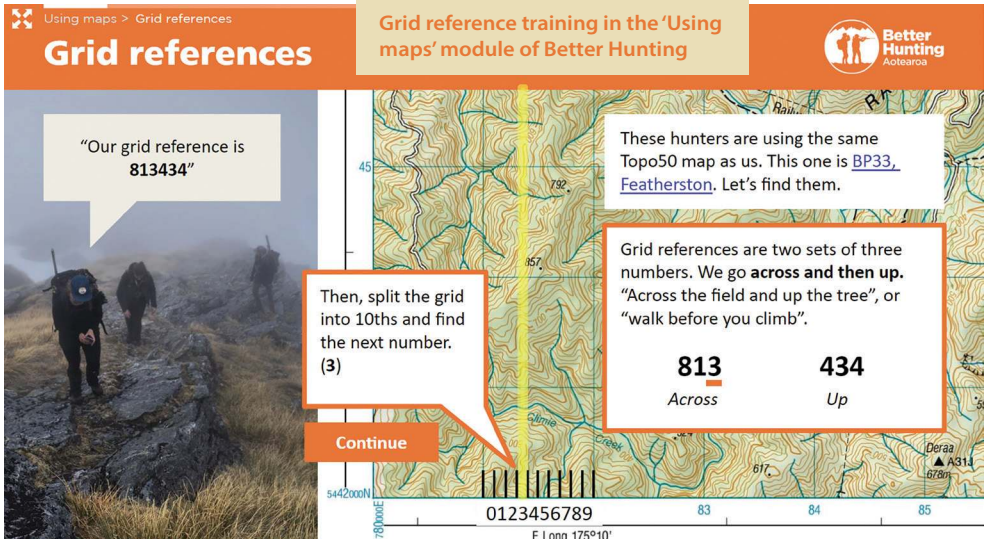
Ascents and descents add some time. Add about four minutes per steep contour line and adjust for your fitness and confidence.

To apply these rules to a map, use the Topo50 gridlines. Each gridline square has a distance of 1km (1.4km diagonally). Adjust for the contours and the bush type and you'll have something to go on.

ENVISAGE THE SUN AND WIND MOVEMENT

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Once you're familiar with the map of your hunting area, take a moment to think where the sun will be at different times of the day. You can then incorporate that into your hunt planning. This is particularly useful in winter when the sun is lower and the days shorter.

The sun also impacts dryness and bush cover. Somewhat counter-intuitively, less sunny (south-facing) areas often have larger trees and easier walking options; and in summer can make for cooler travel. Heat and cold have their impact on wind movement too, but that's a lesson for another day.



Grid reference training in the 'Using maps' module of Better Hunting

COMMUNICATING (WITH COORDINATES)

The other useful thing we'll look at here is using maps to communicate. Digital maps are great, and if you don't already have an offline topographic map app on your phone you really should get one - even just as a backup. One thing digital maps are yet to do effectively, however, is share locations with others.

Being able to share and find map coordinates is a fantastic skill. Here's some examples of when you might want to share coordinates:

- Sharing trip intentions in a hut book or in hunting camp notes
- Writing/sharing locations of sign, wallows, heads, campsites, rock bivouacs, open slips, shooting rests etc
- Communicating specific positions over phone or radio
- Finding specific locations from coordinates shared online or in books and other resources.

The most common way to share coordinates (in the manual world) is with grid references.

TO FIND A GRID REFERENCE:

1. Go across your grid lines to the one closest on the left of your point, (e.g. 81)

2. Mentally split the box in 10 and put the box number you're in next. (e.g. if your point is 30% in from the left of the box, we'd go 813)

3. Do the same from the bottom going upward (e.g. 43, 434).

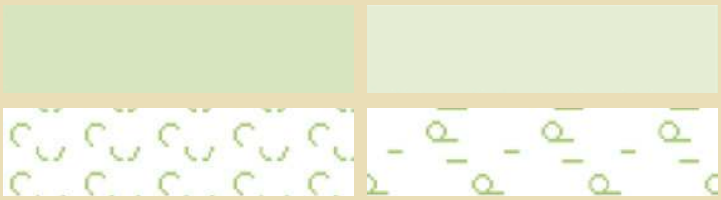
Along with your map code (e.g. BP33), this provides a grid reference. If you wrote BP33 813 434, anyone anywhere in NZ would be able to find that location.

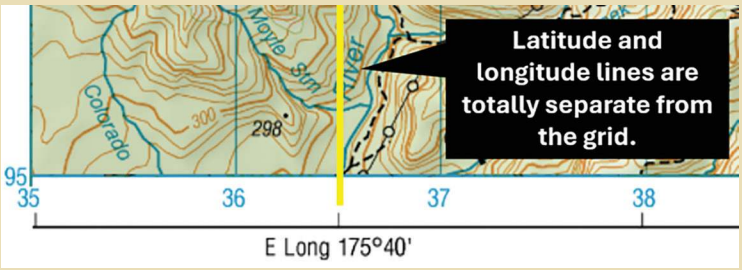
You can get more accurate with more 'splits of 10', (e.g. BP33 8138 4342).

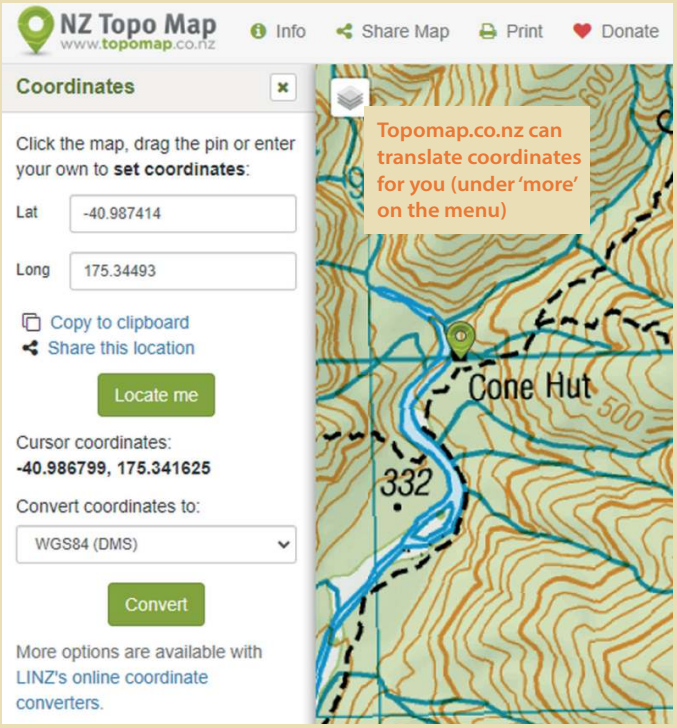
SHORT QUIZ

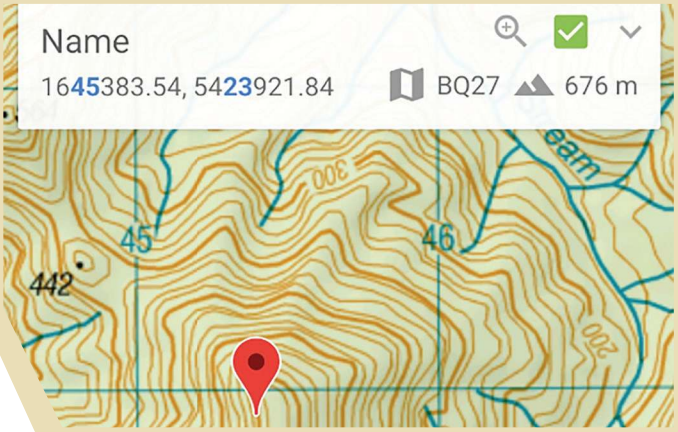
Now, see how you know about map reading with this little quiz – you'll find answers at the end.

1. When considering map coordinates, do you read the 'across' or 'up' coordinates first?
2. How many metres' in elevation do contour lines represent?
3. On a map cliff symbol (), is it the flat side or spikey side that represents the 'drop off'?
4. What is the six-digit Topo50 map coordinate from the full easting and northing reference '1783604E 544898N'
5. Which of the vegetation features below would make for the slowest travel?









A smartphone app marker view. BQ27 is the Topo50 map, 45 and 23 is the grid box reference. The numbers after that are progressively more pin-point accurate to location – BQ27 453 239 would be typical

GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES: LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE

Geographic coordinates are your classic international latitude and longitude (lat/lon). They are measured in degrees, minutes and seconds; or more easily, just two numbers.

-42.812125, 171.967507 is 42° 48' 43.65" S 171° 58' 3.0252" E.

The first one is a bit easier.

Latitude is the vertical number, plus or minus 90 from the equator. Longitude is the horizontal, going from -180 to +180 with 0 being Greenwich in London. Around New Zealand it's all in the -40, 170 ballpark.

You can find lat and lon on a topographical map, but it's a pain because the earth isn't perfectly round and it's a bit off from the map grid, which of course, is flat. Honestly, it's easier to leave lat and lon coordinates to GPS devices.

GRID COORDINATES: EASTINGS & NORTHINGS

Eastings and northings are grid coordinates; they're mapped to the flat panel world of maps rather than the round world of the Earth. They're great on maps and for use by us mere humans.

The following grid references all have eastings (horizontal, x) and northings (vertical, y) and can be found on a topographical map. These are all coordinates for Cone Hut in the Tararuas:

- BP33 9726 5999 (NZGD2000)
- 1797258E 5459992N (NZTM)
- 1797258 mE 5459992 mN (NZTM)

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

If you need to share a location, grid references may make more sense in some situations than lat and lon. It's quite hard to use lat and lon without devices in the field, but grid references are easy to say, hear, write and find.

TURNING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Studying maps can be good fun and many hunters become real 'map geeks'. The more you study maps for your hunting areas, the more they can tell you. And with just a little coordinate competence you can communicate important map locations with others you may hunt with. This theory stuff is great, but it's hard to learn exclusively by just reading stuff; so, get hold of maps for your local hunting spots, get studying them and then head out and apply that knowledge in the field.

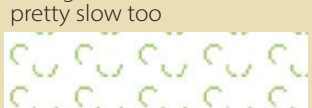
If you'd like more detail on using maps and other hunting-related skills, check out the Hunting Essentials programme at betterhunting.nz

ANSWERS

1. 'Across' then 'up' (x then y)
2. 20 metres (100m per major)
3. Flat side
4. 836 489
5. Probably the mangroves



Though the scrub would be pretty slow too



SOAR INTO THE NEW SEASON

WITH YOUR LOCAL HUNTING & FISHING NEW ZEALAND GAMEBIRD EXPERTS...



Hunting & Fishing® NEW ZEALAND

SIMON O'CONNOR - HUNTING & FISHING NZ, MANAWATU

FOR MOST, THE FIRST SATURDAY IN MAY IS JUST ANOTHER DAY, BUT FOR OUR STORE STAFF AND OWNERS, IT'S AN OCCASION AKIN TO BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS, CHRISTMAS, AND NEW YEAR'S ALL WRAPPED INTO ONE THRILLING WEEKEND. THEIR ENTHUSIASM ISN'T JUST ABOUT THEIR OPENING DAY; IT'S ALSO ABOUT EMPOWERING CUSTOMERS ON THEIR OWN OUTDOOR ADVENTURES.

MOJO Flock a Flicker 2



HOTDEAL

NOW $199.99 RRP $259.99 SAVE $60

AVERY Essential Decoys 12 pack *



ONLY $129.99

AVERY New Motion Decoys NEWPRODUCT

Finisher Spitter



ONLY $299.99

Finisher Swimmer



ONLY $329.99

MOJO Pocket Pick Stick



NOW $69.99 RRP $99.99 SAVE $30

ELEY Steel Shotshell



FROM $269.99

HUNTING & FISHING NZ Universal Cleaning Kit



HOTDEAL

NOW $49.99 RRP $69.99 SAVE $20

WIN your cashback

Benelli BERETTA 500 YEARS. ONE PASSION.

EXCLUSIVE TO Hunting & Fishing NEW ZEALAND

Ts & Cs apply

BENELLI M2 Deal Blast! MORE M2 DEALS IN-STORE OR ONLINE!



HOTDEALS

M2 Optifade Camo 12GA 28" NOW $2599 RRP $2849 SAVE $250

M2 Black Synthetic 12GA 28" NOW $2299 RRP $2649 SAVE $350

EXCLUSIVE TO Hunting & Fishing NEW ZEALAND

GIRSAN MC312 Bonus Offer



FREE! GUNBAG & CLEANING KIT VALUED AT $139.98

Camo ONLY $999.99

Synthetic ONLY $899.99



CHURCHILL Waterfowler Pro

RH ONLY $999.99

Now available LH ONLY $1099

DUCK LICENCE BONUS FREE!



GERBER EVO TITANIUM POCKET KNIFE

RRP VALUE $49.99. Ts & Cs apply.

SEE IN-STORE FOR MORE DEALS AND INFORMATION.

Pricing & promotions valid only while stocks last or until the 5th of May 2024.

BERETTA
500 YEARS. ONE PASSION.
Gallery
TIKKA
SECOND TO NONE
Benelli
Stoeger
Works As Hard As You Do
sako
demand perfection
FRANCHI

WINNER



1 Bryce and Caleb Jeffries' efforts with Dad's help on their first Opening Weekend morning with a Franchi 612vs 12 gauge

2 Sophie Bennetts (9) enjoying a morning out duck shooting with a Benelli M2





3 Oscar Johnston (12) with his first stag, shot with his dad in Mawheranui National Park using a Sako 7mm-08

YOU CAN WIN

STEINER
Nothing Escapes You

SEND US YOUR HUNTING PHOTOS FEATURING ONE OF THE BERETTA FAMILY OF PRODUCTS AS LISTED ABOVE AND



THE WINNING PHOTO WILL RECEIVE A PAIR OF STEINER SAFARI ULTRASHARP 10X25 BINOCULARS

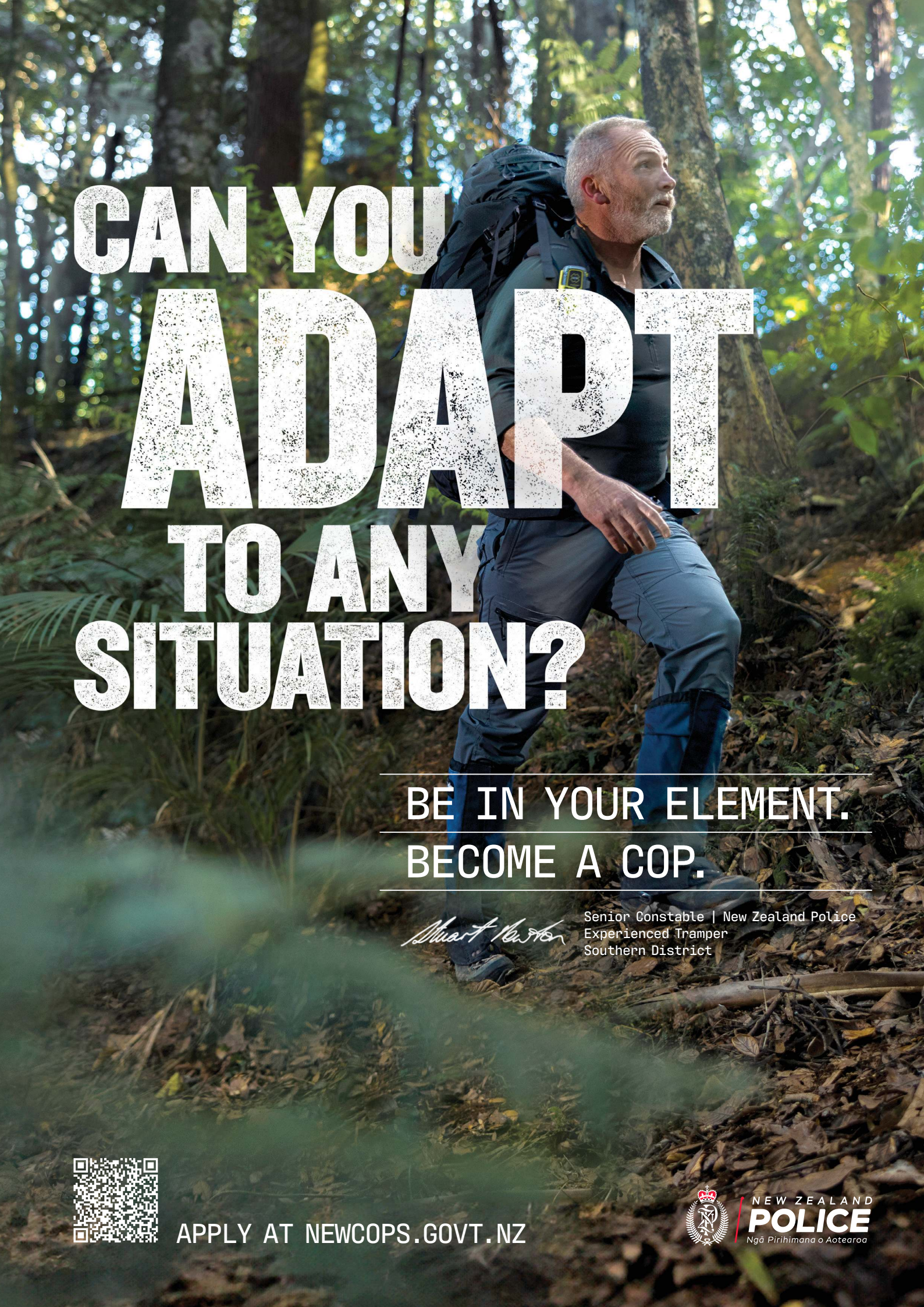
Entries should be emailed to editor@nzhunter.co.nz - Subject: Beretta Photo Competition
Firearm used must be shown in photo



4 Cooper Hansen (8) with his Stoeger RX20 177 doing some great shooting taking three good size rabbits was over the moon



5 Ross Murray with a chamois taken using his Tikka T3


CAN YOU
ADAPT
TO ANY
SITUATION?
BE IN YOUR ELEMENT.
BECOME A COP.
Senior Constable | New Zealand Police
Experienced Tramper
Southern District
APPLY AT NEWCOPS.GOVT.NZ
NEW ZEALAND
POLICE
Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa



Can you spot the pig?

WRITTEN BY - **LUKE CARE**

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

We've all got to be humbled every now and then, and some situations are a bit more painful than others

The day started in my happy place. A frosty winter morning, my mates Jack Bird and Trent Flay had come out for a weekend morning hunt, and I had Kohi and Moon in the trailer ready for an adventure. Moon was Kohi's sister but had only recently come back to us as a three year old, so was still assimilating in to our pack of dogs. I was looking forward to a relaxed hunt with just the two adult dogs, no pups doing stupid things, the weather was beautiful and I'd just found fresh sign.

Walking along the boundary fence between the grass and the public land behind there was some fresh rooting in the rich Waikato soil. It wasn't super fresh, certainly not still steaming, but it was likely no older than the previous evening.

I looked at the surrounding topography, consulted my hard-earned mental catalogue of pig activity in the area, and headed out a ridge I thought it likely the boar had travelled back to. **Imagine my smug smile when the dogs ripped on ahead, clearly tracking the boar's scent.**

The three of us walked steadily behind, trying to keep the gap manageable if the dogs did catch up to him. Sure enough Kohi's barks rang out, the master had stuck with it long enough and found the boar in his nest. Moon wasn't too far off and looking at the GPS I could see she had heard it and was on her way. I upped the pace and we sprinted through the native, but things had gone strangely quiet when we next stopped for air.

Looking at the GPS it had question marks down in the gully, meaning it had lost reception on the dogs. Around here that can mean they've fallen into a tomo, which ranges from being a pain in the backside to downright fatal. My smug smile was fading.

We carried on sprinting, hearing a couple of loud barks and then nothing again.

As I neared the last known position it was eerily quiet and I slowed our pace. I strained my ears over my pumping heart rate to see if I could hear muffled barking from underground. I glanced down at the GPS and we'd already overshot the marks. Concerning. We found some muddied ground where Kohi had the boar bailed against a slab of limestone, with a dropoff in to the creek next door. I peered down and caught a flash of tan fur swirling in a pool in the creek.

My heart dropped in an instant. I felt sick with the crashing realisation. It all made sense; why the reception had dropped off, why everything was so eerily quiet. That was Kohi dead in the creek.

I scrambled down frantically, seized a leg through the swirling leaf litter, and drew up a week-old dead goat the exact shade of Kohi's coat. I barked a relieved laugh as the dread left me and dragged my fingers through my hair as I put all of those terrible emotions back in the box. We haven't lost a dog for a very long time and I want to keep it that way.

I still had to wonder where he had got to though. I went back to where the pig had been bailed and followed the marks more

carefully to the entrance to a cave. Poking my head in I could see daylight ten metres away where it punched clean through a limestone outcrop. Interesting but not helpful.

Jack and I made the call to leave the broken gully and gain some height to hopefully pick up a signal from the collars away from the jumbled rock, maybe the pig had just broken and they weren't down a tomo we couldn't find. A minute after I had poked my aerial into the muzzle of the 44 to create a backcountry signal booster we picked them up, over a kilometre away and steadily increasing the distance.

We started running hard, but back to the grass. I radioed Trent, who had gone back to the bike, to come around a gully and pick us up. Half an hour later, puffing and panting, we collapsed on to the tray and I wheezed out some directions. **Stopping at a high point I picked the dogs up and planned an intercept.**

By chance, the pig's exit had looped him back around closer to the grass, and Kohi and Moon had pulled him up again only 500m away. Less fortunately, and much to my frustration, Moon had heard the bike roaring around and decided that this pig was too much hard work.

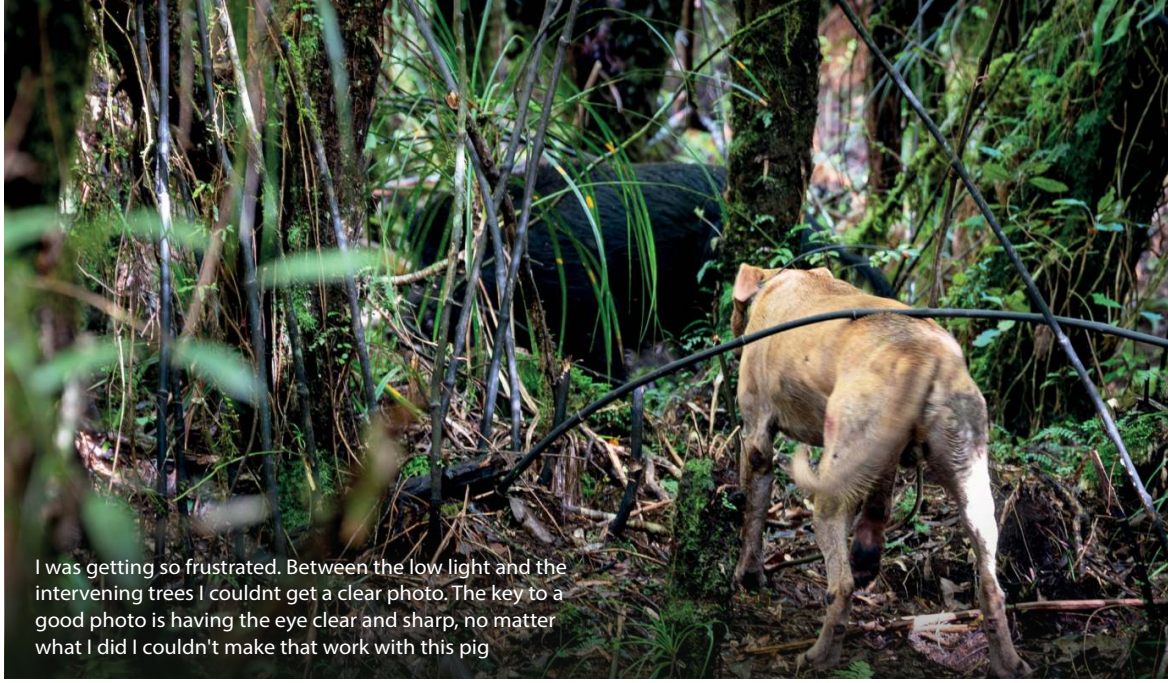
Kohi still had the pig bailed so Jack and I zoomed off again, ducking and twisting through supplejack and smashing shins into hidden limestone boulders. As we dropped into the ferny, swampy gully I could hear the steady rhythmic bail of a single tired dog with long pauses between bouts of bailing. **We snuck in closer, quickly seeing Kohi but struggling to make out the pig.** I readied the camera and suddenly a shadow morphed in to a scruffy black boar chomping his tusks behind a screen on punga. I fired off a stack of photos but struggled with the very low light and focusing through the intervening bush. The pig was steadily walking back and we quietly shadowed it, while Kohi threw exasperated looks over his shoulder. The canine equivalent of "hurry the hell up!".

I decided enough was enough and asked Jack to pass me the gun. He asked if he could shoot it and against my better judgment I said yes. We only had one dog to mind, the bush was fairly open and it wasn't a monster of a pig, it was a reasonable scenario for Jack to try his first shot at a pig in the bail.

However, Kohi was fading big time. He'd been on this pig for kilometres with little help from his sister. **Spittle was flying with each bark and he was keeping a healthy distance on his tired legs.** The pig snuck back and backed up a hill, we had a couple of long range shot options but I wanted a better position for Jack's first shot using the dirty old open sight 44 magnum.

As the pig pushed into a screen of kiekie the situation became far less comfortable. This is a boar's element, with the advantages stacking in his favour. Kohi pushed up after him and in a split second it all went pear-shaped.

The boar huffed, I managed a squawk to warn Jack and then the black landslide came barreling down the hillside. Dead leaves were flying, we scrambled back, and Kohi valiantly leapt into the fray. He grabbed an ear, anchoring the pig just below us for a second. I had the button pressed down



I was getting so frustrated. Between the low light and the intervening trees I couldnt get a clear photo. The key to a good photo is having the eye clear and sharp, no matter what I did I couldn't make that work with this pig



Pig in full view - but still his head was obscured! This was when we made the call to stop fluffing around with the camera

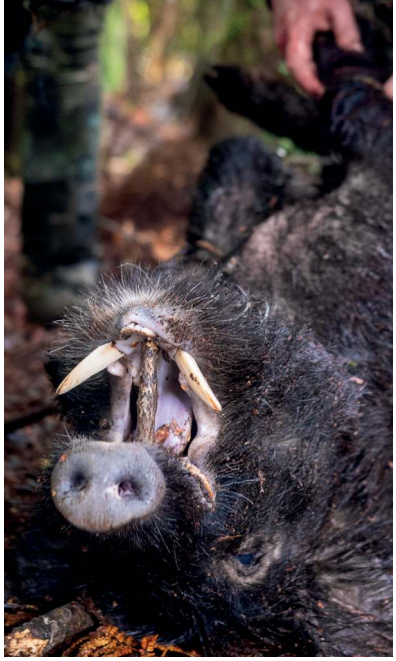


I held the shutter down when things went pear shaped, there's about three milliseconds between photos, and another three before it was all over





Just shy of 100lb, mostly bone and gristle, he was a tough pig. The jaw wasn't large, but jeepers was it sharp





Shayla Maclean on the carry out

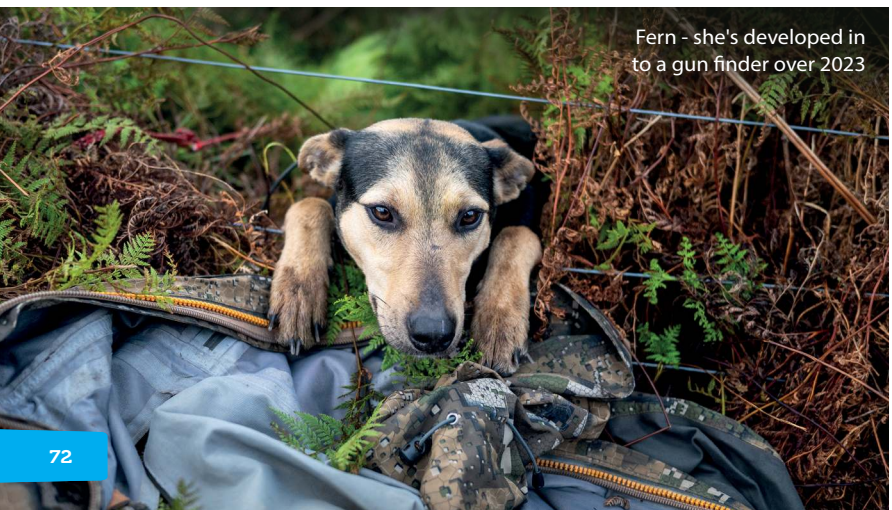
on continuous shutter on the camera which captured the same freeze-frames etched in my mind as the freight train hurtled past. It was all over in less than a second, but I remember watching the boar spin around once, then twice, but this time he got his head under Kohi's legs, flipping him over his head with that razor sharp jaw going underneath. **Kohi let go as he was ripped under the ribs, twisted in midair, and leapt to grab the boars back end.** We scrambled after as they ripped over the edge and listened to the fading crashing. Seconds later it all went quiet. We sprinted down but Kohi had decided that we were a useless bunch of bastards and he'd had enough for the day. Fair enough too mate.

Should I have let Jack try for the shot? In hindsight, no. Would it had have made a difference if I had the gun? Maybe. Enough of a 'maybe' for me to seriously regret it. Kohi was simply too tired for this to be Jack's first go at shooting a pig at the bail. There were a couple of snap shots I may have taken, but the mere possibility ripped me up as I looked at the gouge along my canine mate's ribs. I shouldn't have let that happen.

Exhausted, we all trudged back to the bike very slowly that day. **Giving Moon a glower for not being there to support her brother as I reached the fence line.**

A month or so later we were back in the area on a wet overcast day. Kohi was still on the mend, but we had Moon as well as Fern and Tawa, another brother and sister combo from a younger litter. The team had changed slightly with my Dad, my brother Jake and his partner Shayla along with brothers Harry and Max McConnell.

This time the pig's undoing was a dead ewe we'd dragged up to the fence as bait, and once again the dogs tore away from the grass along the same ridge heading for the same gully as they followed his scent from that morning. I was wise to his exit plan now so we ran down the ridge hard on the dogs heels. This time the bristly warrior didn't even make it to the creek. Tawa, Fern and Moon had him pulled up in the punga on the side of the ridge and they were taking no chances.



Fern - she's developed in to a gun finder over 2023

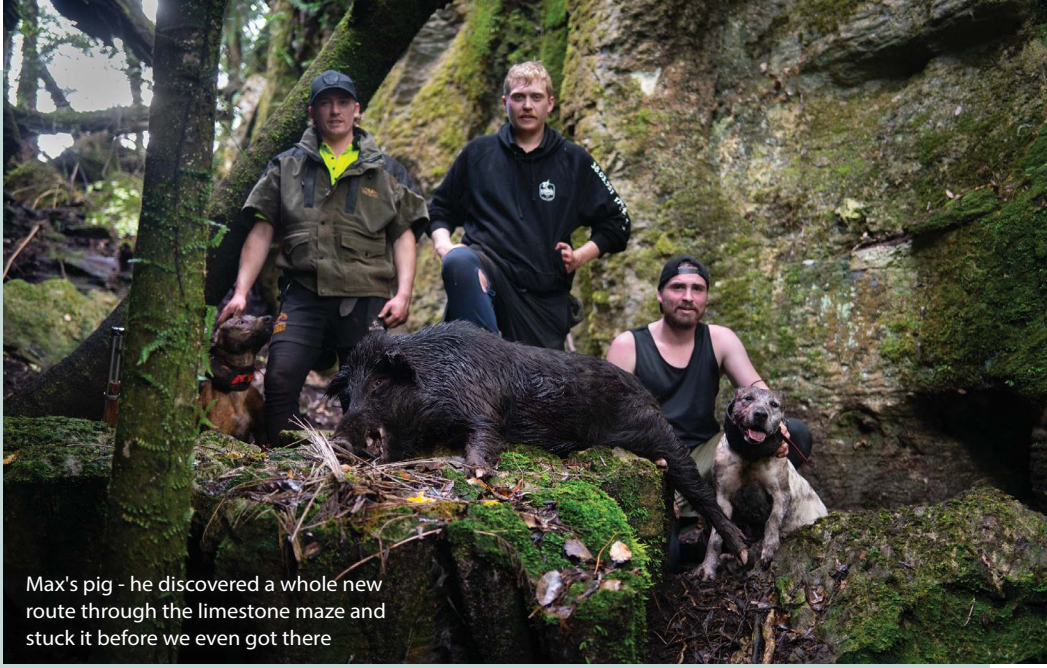


Fern and Tawa, the big scary pig dogs, hanging out with Harry

No quiet bail today, they had all leapt into grab him while he had a full bladder and hadn't done his morning stretches. Harry and I were there first so I seized the boar's back legs and flipped him for Harry to stick. It all felt so simple after the marathon the month before.

It was a bittersweet moment catching up with the pig. I recognized him from the area and his white hock. It was good redemption for Kohi's injury, but I respected the tough old 100lb boar who'd fought his way free the month before. He was in quite poor condition, a pig who'd lived most of his life deep in the native on hard tucker, and the jaw wasn't massive but absolutely razor sharp. I actually pricked my finger testing the point!

That was only the beginning for that day though. When we'd made it back to the bike we decided to go and explore the other end of the farm. Reaching that bushline the dogs perked up and tracked through a hole in the fence. From here it's almost always a big walk, the pigs never seem to camp close by and they always seem to gain some distance on the hounds. **Knowing this we started losing layers, tightening our bootlaces and keeping an eye on the GPS.** Sure enough the dogs were streaking out a leading ridge together.



Max's pig - he discovered a whole new route through the limestone maze and stuck it before we even got there

Jake, Harry, Max and I started steaming along the ridge. It's great going for a while, but like so much of that limestone country it just ends abruptly in a bluff. We dropped down a horrible little limestone gully, heading the only way I knew out there. At this point we left Max behind but he had a GPS so we didn't need to wait.

We nearly blew a gasket getting around a horrible rock outcrop, and as we finally got to some nicer country and snuck in to the bail it all went quiet. Ah crap, what happened there I wondered? I cautiously poked my nose through a crevice in the bluff above and saw Max! He had cut off a ridge we'd never explored and found a hell of a route straight to the bail, sticking the pig himself. The rest of us were a sweaty mess and he'd just cut the corner. The first pig he'd stuck on his own too.

It was slightly bigger than the earlier pig, weighing 104lb, a much younger animal but he'd still managed to break both tusks already. **We carried that boar out 'Max's Track' very pleased with ourselves and our efforts for the day.**





OUTDOOR SPORTS NEW ZEALAND

YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER IN PERFORMANCE OUTDOOR GEAR
FOR OVER 30 YEARS.
www.outdoorsportsnz.com

FIND OUT
MORE
ONLINE

HUNTSMAN OPTICS

HIKMICRO

SIGHT

GET IT ON Google Play

Download on the App Store

The **Huntsman Optics** Thermal range delivers on quality and precision and consistently out performs in the toughest of outdoors conditions.

Alpex 4K



The ALPEX 4K boasts a 3840×2160 UHD detector, delivering unprecedented, layered ultra-high-definition imagery. It offers exceptional daytime color and clarity at extreme ranges with a versatile 3.5 – 28x zoom, ideal for various hunting scenarios, from dense woodlands to open fields.

A New Benchmark for Digital Day and Night Vision Scopes

- 4K UHD Resolution
- Precise Shooting
- Internal Ballistic Calculation
- Fast Boot-On

STARTING FROM
$1,899.00



ALPEX 4K

MODEL	RANGE	FOV	MAG	SENSOR	NZD inc Gst RRP Display
A50EL	1000m	8.8° ×5.0°	3.5-28, x8	3840 ×2160	$2,399.00
A50E					$1,899.00

Habrok

The HikMicro Habrok binoculars merge thermal imaging with advanced optics, catering to both avid adventurers and professionals. Featuring a sub-20mK NETD sensor for sharp thermal images and a powerful 1800m detection range, they excel in various light conditions, with Zoom Pro technology ensuring clarity at all magnifications.



- <20 mK NETD — Ultra clear image, impressive detail recognition
- Purpose-built image algorithm brings stunning image quality
- All-in-One Design
- Comfortable Visual Experience
- Replaceable batteries

STARTING FROM
$4,999.00



HABROK

MODEL	RANGE	FOV	MAG	SENSOR	NZD inc Gst RRP Display
HQ35LN	1800m | 350m	Thermal 12.5°×10.1° Optical 13.9°x7.8°	3-24 Thermal 2.9-23.2 Optical , x 8	640 × 512, 12 µm, NETD < 20mK	$6,499.00
HQ35L	1800m | 400m				$6,499.00
HH35LN	1800m | 350m				$4,999.00
HH35L	1800m | 400m				$4,999.00

facebook.com/Thermalsimagingoceania
youtube.com/@huntsmanoptics8102

DEFINE
HOW YOU SEE THE GAME

www.huntsmanoptics.com



ONE MORE ROAR

WRITTEN BY - S TAG

Photo | Jordan Kappely

THERE'S A BLOCK I LIKE TO VISIT FOR THE ROAR

It always has a high number of hinds, but on the flip side it gets hammered by quite a few hunters. This doesn't bother me too much because I've been coming here for years and know where the deer usually hang out.

After a quick scan of the DOC car park, my suspicions were confirmed. The park was full of big shiny 4WD vehicles - spotlights, bullbars, snorkels and winches, just about every imaginable accessory on show!

In the far corner however there was an old Landrover. I forget the last time I even saw one - they were the original go-anywhere vehicle and owned by real hunters. Not like these weekend warriors whose idea of a great weekend is getting the Hilux stuck, winching it out only to get it stuck again and then driving back to the city covered in mud, showing off what a marvellous 4WDriver you are!

Anyway, the bush is going to be full of trigger happy wannabe hunters hoping to bag a deer to strap on their bullbars and parade around town. I'll just keep my head down, be quiet and climb up above the thick stuff where one's likely to get shot by accident.

So after a while, making my way up the main ridge, I hear a kerfuffle in the creek. Breaking branches and thrashing bushes. Then a hunter crashes out into a small clearing, electronic roaring device in one hand and GPS in the other, his blaze orange jacket gleaming!

He had a shiny stainless steel rifle with one of those big fancy scopes with large knobs on to click up or down. We're in thick bush for fricks sake, you can't see further than 30 meters in any direction, through that thing at a deer would just be a big brown blur!

Whatever happened to the old school hunters, with ex-army rifles and open sights, Buller boots and an old Swandri? They didn't need a GPS to tell them the sun rose in the east and set in the west.

I was well hidden in a patch of fern, so just for the hell of it I let out a roar. The guy just about crapped himself, swung his rifle off his shoulder, jammed a round up the spout and hit the button on the electronic caller - wrong one! "quaaack quack quack quack". Mallard greeting call - what a dork, I almost felt embarrassed for him.

He recovered his composure, got a roar going then came creeping up the face towards me, big gun swinging left and right. I thought shit this might get dangerous - there's no way he's going to identify his target, he's gonna shoot first, ask questions later!

I kept low. He got so close I could smell him. A sickly combination of bacon fat and sweat. He went past and I waited 'til he went over the next ridge. Too many bloody idiots here for my liking, I need to get to higher ground!

I climbed up, letting out the occasional cautious roar - no replies, no hunters up this high.

About an hour later, approaching a likely looking terrace, I let rip with another roar, just as a young hind stepped out of cover. In my younger days I probably would have taken her, but way up here she's probably got a stag with her.

Then I heard a breaking twig and caught a whiff of something feral and before I knew it he appeared out of the sun, an old geezer wearing a dirty, ripped jersey and holding an old 303 that looked like it might've killed more than just a few deer!

We looked straight at each other and he slowly raised the rifle.

I try to scream - what the hell mate - don't point that thing at me! But a small moan escapes my lips instead, and with that he lowered the gun, smiled a strange little smile and disappeared back into the sun!

This wasn't the first time someone's pointed a rifle at me, but it was certainly the closest. I'm getting too old for this shit!

I blinked the sweat out of my eyes, glanced up - nine points, well past my prime, but one day these antlers will be the bloody death of me!!

STONEY CREEK®

DON'T BE FOOLED BY ITS ...

ULTRA LIGHT WEIGHT

JACKET 526 G | OVERTROUSERS 468 G | *SIZE: M | FULL RAINWEAR SET

UNDER 1KG *

... APPEARANCE. THE NITZ RAINWEAR RANGE PUNCHES WELL ABOVE ITS WEIGHT.

INTRODUCING

THE NITZ

PREMIUM PERFORMANCE RAINWEAR

GAIN THE TECHNICAL EDGE AND LEARN MORE AT **WWW.STONEYCREEK.CO.NZ**



GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL NEWS

WRITTEN BY
TIM GALE | GENERAL MANAGER

Game Animal Council
NEW ZEALAND

This may look like an impressive set of antlers, but the stag is only a 4 year old. Imagine what he might become in another 4-6 years!

Hunt for the future this Roar

By the time this edition of NZ Hunter hits the shelves, we will be in the middle of the Roar, or what I like to think of as 'Christmas time for hunters.'

The Roar is undeniably an exciting time; however, it is also a time when we need to think about the animals we are hunting, the environment they are in and what we want hunting to be like in the future.

The reality is that if we want to hunt bigger and older stags or bucks with trophy potential in the years to come, we have to be judicious about the animals we harvest today. This is one side of the game animal management equation, and the Roar is when we see its impact.

If we are discerning about what we shoot and focus on shooting mature stags or bucks, then quality immature males are given a chance to not only reach their full potential but also pass on their genes through the competitive breeding process. This will lead to higher quality males and better Roar hunting in the years to come. It should be noted that not all areas have quality bloodlines, with some herds seldom producing high quality males. In these places hunting is more about the experience and food gathering, with limited potential for future trophy animals.

As a Kiwi hunter, harvesting to feed your family and the conservation of our native species are just as important as taking a trophy animal.

If you are hunting for meat in areas with trophy potential - shoot the hind, not the spiker or young stag. Not only does that allow the young males time to develop, but as females are the breeders, removing some from the population is the most effective form of hunter-led herd management.

If you are planning on hunting Red deer this Roar and want to quickly and accurately know how to tell a mature from an immature stag, then head to the GAC website (nzgac.org.nz) and download the NZ Red Stag Ageing Guide. There are also Red and Sika stag ageing games on the Better Hunting online hunter education platform (betterhunting.nz)

The other key aspect of the Roar is, of course, hunter safety. For me, mitigating the chance of an accident or injury comes down to two things: good preparation and making smart decisions while out on the hill.

I am a big believer that if you undertake the right planning and preparation including carrying the right gear, checking the forecast, communicating with your hunting party on the hill, taking a personal locator beacon and leaving detailed intentions then you significantly reduce your risk.

Making good decisions while out hunting involves knowing you and your party's limitations, positively identifying your target beyond all doubt and respecting the terrain and conditions.

Ensure you have the skills

A Coroner's report into the drowning of a hunter came to the GAC's attention recently as it highlights an important, but often overlooked, safety consideration for all outdoor recreationists.

The deceased was on a hunting trip, which involved some rafting. He was dressed and prepared for hunting, but not for rafting. He was also not wearing a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) and was not ready for a capsize. When he did find himself in the water,



Packrafting is growing in popularity but it requires specialist gear and skills to do it safely

his hunting apparel, rifle and heavy boots all conspired to lessen his chances of survival.

The Coroner's recommendation, that I believe all of us in the outdoor recreation sector need to consider is, the importance of being appropriately prepared for the activity you are undertaking at the time. That means if you plan on packrafting, kayaking or rafting, wear a lifejacket or PFD, wear appropriate clothing, a helmet and light footwear. Also ensure you have the necessary skills to competently navigate the river and avoid dangers. Know your eddies and currents and how to manage those.

The same advice applies to other ancillary activities related to hunting. If you embark on alpine travel on steep terrain ensure you carry and have practiced using crampons and an ice axe, and consider taking a snowcraft course before you do this kind of hunting. If you are using a four-wheel-drive across difficult country, then ensure you have the right vehicle, equipment and an appropriate amount of offroad driving experience.

Undertaking outdoor adventures frequently requires us to step out of our comfort zone, but if you do not have the skills and appropriate gear for the activity, then, as the Coroner's report suggests, sit it out.

New content for Better Hunting

Our free online training programme, Better Hunting, continues to go from strength to strength with nearly 3,000 people now signed up and working their way through the 29 individual modules.

Being an online platform, means that we can make updates to it even once it is live and also allows us to incorporate the latest advice and knowledge.

We have addressed the issue of watercraft and rafting safety that came out of the Coroner's recommendations, as discussed above, and have added this in the 'River Safety for Hunters' module. For more specialist and technical advice, please visit the Water Safety NZ Or Packrafting Association of NZ websites.

We are getting rave reviews about the new multi-map tool we have developed to help hunters 'e-scout' hunting locations far more easily. This new tool helps you explore many maps of interest all at once. Simply click a place of interest on the topographic map, then you can jump straight to that location across maps including weather, aerial photography, poison applications and many others.

We are also excited to be working with the New Zealand Pig Hunting Association and have an 'introduction to pig hunting' course in development that we hope to release in the near future. This will cover everything from animal welfare, firearms choices, meat safety, and dog welfare and training.

Finally, I want to thank Willie, Emil and the team for inviting me on a Canterbury Red deer hunt as part of their most recent season of NZ Hunter Adventures. It was good fun and while we were unable to locate a big Red stag it was good to be able to knock over a few hinds, contribute to the management of the herd and take some meat home for family and friends. Cheers guys, it was a blast!

The NZ Game Animal Council is a statutory organisation working to improve the management of game animals and hunting for recreation, communities, commerce and conservation.

www.betterhunting.nz





A SERIES PROFILING A TAHR BALLOT BLOCK EACH ISSUE

ADAMS RANGE

WRITTEN BY ~ CAM MCKAY | POINTS SOUTH

TAHR BALLOT BLOCKS

The steep and rather scenic Adams Range towers above the Barlow River to the south and the Poerua River to the north, with the landing site on the northern side, about halfway up to the 2000 meter peaks above



With an exposed campsite at 1350 meters above sea level the potential is there to get an absolute hammering if the wind gets up, which is exactly what we experienced on our last visit. We spent most of one night with our tents folding over and slapping our faces in the big gusts.

Water is fairly handy with both a creek and a tarn if it's not frozen over, and this is one of only two ballot blocks I know that gets a bit of phone reception here and there, whether you mention that to the boss or the better half or just turn your phone off is really the question.

The campsite provides some great glassing of the steep face above, just be aware if shooting from camp as much of what your looking at will result in a bull ending up in an irretrievable position.

The ridge a short climb to the east also provides a great vantage point, but limited accessibility as the creek drops away steeply into the Poerua below. Heading west you have nice low angle tussock slopes which is easy going, and if you're a bit more ambitious you can get the next terrace over. You do have to find a way through the steep creek to get there, here's is where a rope would be quite helpful.

Some of the steep face above camp can be accessed, but it does involve a couple of manoeuvers through some very steep pinches. Given the elevation you will most likely have some snow to deal with, a certainty in those later periods. On our last visit we climbed up the face in nice firm snow conditions, only for the day to become a real scorcher, which made the thin snowpack deteriorate quickly given the solar aspect. Forcing us to stay on safe ridges high on the face all day, until just before dark when we had enough refreeze to be able to pick our way down through the steep sections again.

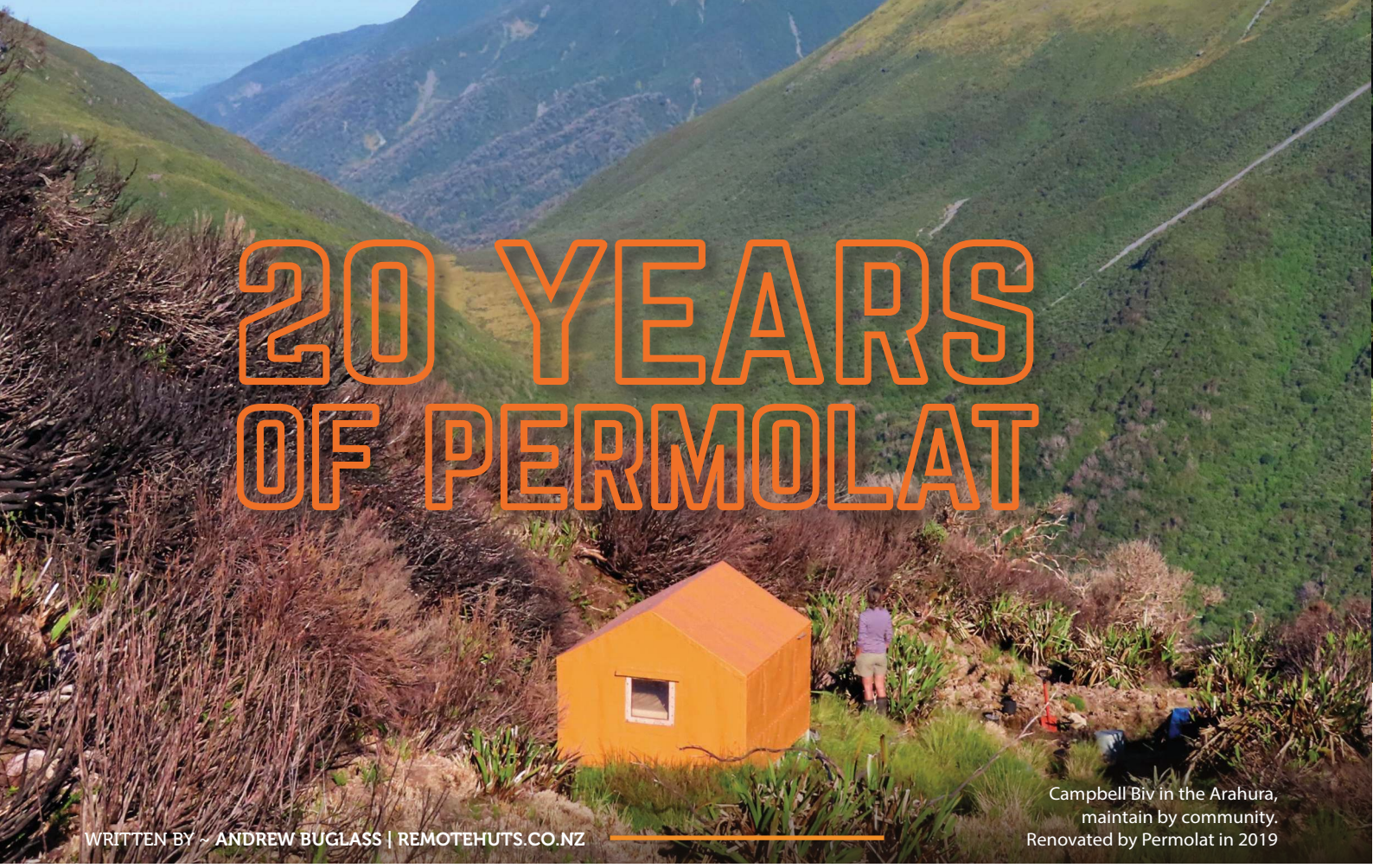
Particularly once we've had a good snowfall, I'd say that the Adams Range landing site is better suited to those more comfortable in the steeper country and in crampons with an axe in hand, otherwise the scope can be a bit limited.




NEW
7 PRC
The new 7mm Precision Rifle Cartridge delivers results from the treestand to the mountain top. This high performance, modern 7mm cartridge utilizes long, heavy for caliber bullets in a standard long action. With results you can count on, trust your next hunt or ELR match to the 7mm PRC.
Precision Hunter® 175 gr. ELD-X®
Match™ 180 gr. ELD® Match
Outfitter® 160 gr. CX®
FIND OUT MORE
New Zealand Agent Steve's Wholesale
www.steveswholesale.nz
0800 303 303
team@steveswholesale.nz


Packrafts designed by hunters, for hunters.
Packrafts, paddles, accessories, and all the gear you need to bring it home.
BLUE DUCK
Check out the new Whaiwhai today!.
Bringing it home...
Mitch Thorn bringing it home in a Blue Duck Whaiwhai.
www.packraft.nz
021 993 413

20 YEARS OF PERMOLAT



Campbell Biv in the Arahura, maintain by community. Renovated by Permolat in 2019

WRITTEN BY ~ **ANDREW BUGLASS | REMOTEHUTS.CO.NZ**

Congratulations to NZ Hunter as it celebrates its 100th issue and for the well-deserved popularity it has garnished along the way

2024 is also a small milestone for the Permolat - Remote Huts group as well. It was established 20 years ago in an effort try and save some of the remote low-use huts that were dilapidating or under threat of removal by the Department of Conservation around that time.

The outdoor community had already witnessed several decades of slow deterioration of these unique facilities. Like the rest I had griped about the situation but thought that if I waited long enough, some higher power would come and fix things like they did in the old days. The realisation that this wasn't going to happen was confirmed with the release of a DOC review in 2003. **This left no doubt about the direction things were going as it listed all the huts that were going to be removed or minimally maintained (until they fell over).**

This was a good kick in the butt for me and led to the setting up of the Remote Huts website which I hoped would raise awareness of the at-risk huts, many of which were still in reasonably good nick, and in beautiful locations. If fortune smiled, I thought we might be able to save a few of the huts. The Permolat online platform was created along with the website and the group grew out of this. To my surprise and great delight, the online component worked like a charm and in no time, we had organised a very scattered and diverse bunch of outdoor types into an enthusiastic collective prepared to roll up their sleeves and start doing the hut maintenance and trackwork themselves. **We didn't make any official approaches to DOC initially, figuring we would get a "no" if we did.** However, after an initial bit of dancing around a relationship developed with the Department, followed by more formal arrangements, and eventually, some seeding funding from their new CEO, Lou Sanson. Our early activities quickly caught the eye of the wider outdoor community, and became a catalyst for volunteers and



Permolat trackcutters on Fraser Peak in the Mikonui 2022



Serpentine Hut in the Hokitika - Maintained by Andrew Buglass - Renovated 2015



Moonbeam Hut in the Waitaha, maintained by Waitaha Awa Kaitiaki. Renovated 2021



Sir Robert Hut, maintained by Permolat Renovated 2019 *Hugh Van Noorden*

community groups in other areas.

I never envisaged things snowballing like they did, but I guess I shouldn't have underestimated how much Kiwis love their huts. **In 2006 we signed our first maintain-by-community contract with DOC for Scottys Biv in the Taipo, which had originally been designated for removal.** Other contracts followed along with regular organised track cutting projects and in 2013 Lou publicly announced that there'd be no more hut removals. This wasn't entirely surprising as he and I were schoolmates in Hokitika and spent a lot of our free time in the 1970's exploring the old Forest Service networks in the area. It was serendipitous indeed to have him at DOC's helm helping remove some of the bureaucratic blocks.

In 2013 the High-Country Consortium was set up a dedicated amount of funding taken from the DOC budget for volunteer hut and track projects. Fast forward another decade and we have the Back Country Trust using this modest pot of funding to do a great deal of high-quality maintenance at embarrassingly cost-effective levels. Around 50 huts received attention from them in 2023. **That's not to say that DOC doesn't still have a primary role on the public conservation estate, but face it, their focus will invariably be on higher use areas, great walks, and facilities at the tourism interface.**

Over the years Permolat has acquired a kind of mythical status that it doesn't really deserve. These days it is more of a concept than an actual group. The Permolat Trust still operates and provides small amounts of funding for those undertaking trackwork or smaller projects. The online group folded in 2021 when its platform became unstable. By that stage people were self-organising and doing their own thing, sometimes under the Permolat moniker, sometimes not. The overall result speaks for itself however, with 38 huts in central Westland now having been repaired or fully renovated and taken off DOC's old minimal maintenance or remove schedule.

Where Permolat has probably failed, is in achieving the shift in public consciousness crucial to making this a sustainable model. Hut books are full of, "thanks guys for doing the tracks - great job – you are heroes," but in a few years it is just as likely to be, "why are the tracks overgrowing?" This is unfortunate because it was never our intention to replace DOC as the higher power, or to bolster the unhealthy sense of entitlement New Zealanders have that someone else is going to come and fix things up for them. If the tracks overgrow again, it's because the outdoor community is letting it happen. Some of the tracks you now use and huts you stay in are no longer maintained by DOC with taxpayer money, but by volunteers. In which case you will be getting all the benefits without contributing in any way. **My message to hunters and anyone reading this article is to think about getting more proactive and take on some of the responsibility and ownership of these resources.**

How do you do this? Easy, by carrying some lightweight loppers or a pruning saw on your trips into the hills and spending a bit of your time doing some trackwork. This could involve clearing seedling regeneration or windthrow, or re-marking entrances where they've been wiped away by slips or the river. **Simple stuff, but even a little input helps a lot.** If the volunteer-maintained hut you are staying in has a leak, a rodent problem, or minor repairs necessary - fix it if you can, or notify someone. This is particularly relevant if you are flying into a location and don't have to lug the gear in. The Remote Huts website lists any repairs or trackwork needed on the relevant hut pages. NZDA is already doing some great work around the country but individuals and smaller parties also have a vital role to play. Get off your backsides and go peruse the patch you are planning to head into. **If we had more people or groups adopting a track or a hut and making a long-term commitment to look after it, we'd have the futureproofing problem mostly solved.** The mechanisms are all in place, the relationships have been established, and there is funding that can be accessed. Once you have a personal or group investment in a particular valley, hut, or track, you'll find it very difficult to watch it run down. It worked for us, so how about getting your loppers out folks.

There is a list of tracks for Westland and who is or isn't looking after them on: **https://www.remotehuts.co.nz/tracks.html.** Don't worry if there's already a name next to it. **That person may no longer be active, may be happy to hand it over, or be keen to have extra help.**

REMOTEHUTS.CO.NZ

HUNT HIGHER



High protein meat
High calories
High on flavour
NZ Hunter Adventures approved
Elite Adventure Nutrition

NEW

NZDA
New Zealand Deerstalkers Association

Join NZDA today!

SIGN UP TO GAIN ACCESS TO OUR COMMUNITY OF HUNTERS AND GAIN EXCLUSIVE MEMBER DISCOUNTS.

ADVOCACY
TRADITION
EDUCATION
ETHICS

Members receive exclusive discounts on products and services at your favourite retailers through the official NZDA members app. Find out more on our website.

www.deerstalkers.org.nz

FASTER
EASIER

READY RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX

SIERRA BDX[2.0]
RIFLESCOPES

The world's most advanced optics system



QUICKLY AND EASILY BOND SIERRABDX SCOPES USING QUICKBOND™ FEATURE

PRESET BALLISTIC GROUPS LOADED ON ALL SIERRABDX PRODUCTS

SMARTBDC™ RETICLE WITH HOLDOVER DOTS AUTOMATICALLY SCALE WITH MAGNIFICATION SETTING

APP FREE EASY SET-UP ON ALL SIERRABDX

TO UNLOCK THE ADVANCED FEATURES OR CREATE A CUSTOM BALLISTIC PROFILE, JUST DOWNLOAD THE BDX SMARTPHONE APP

BDX™ 2.0

Ballistic Data Xchange

srmarston.co.nz

SIG SAUER

NEVER SETTLE



WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

KIWI ULTRALIGHT SINGLE QUILT

Kiwi Ultralight are, as the name suggests, a kiwi company - based in Nelson who make ultralight equipment!

Owned by Debra and Cody Howell, long distance trampers with international experience, they manufacture their Ultralight gear here in little ol' New Zealand. Tents, packs and quilts are their major offerings, and I have to say their lightweight DOC mattress-sized fitted sheet is a stroke of genius.

When I first encountered the concept of a quilt I thought they were for ultra-lightweight madmen, or Te Araroa trampers going between huts. Who would give up half of their sleeping bag?

However over the years, as I have appreciated the insulating qualities of quality sleeping mats, I have gained an equal appreciation of how much weight can be saved with a quality sleeping mat and quilt combo. **The other consideration is that when you have a conventional sleeping bag on top of a mat, your weight is crushing that down flat and making it hugely less effective for insulation – so why bother with it at all?**

The concept of a quilt is quite simple. It's two thirds of a sleeping bag, with no zip and relying on your mattress for insulation underneath. It sounds cold, but in reality it's not. Initially I assumed a quilt was basically a square down blanket, but the Kiwi Ultralight ones are much more effective than that.

Kiwi Ultralight offer three weights for their down quilt, and two configurations – the single tested here, and the double, which is a superb weight saving option for couples. Or those hunting buddies that don't mind a cuddle … we all suspect a few.

The three comfort ratings are;

Green shell
Comfort Rating = 5°C
Limit Rating = -1°C

Red shell
Comfort Rating = 0°C
Limit Rating = -6°C

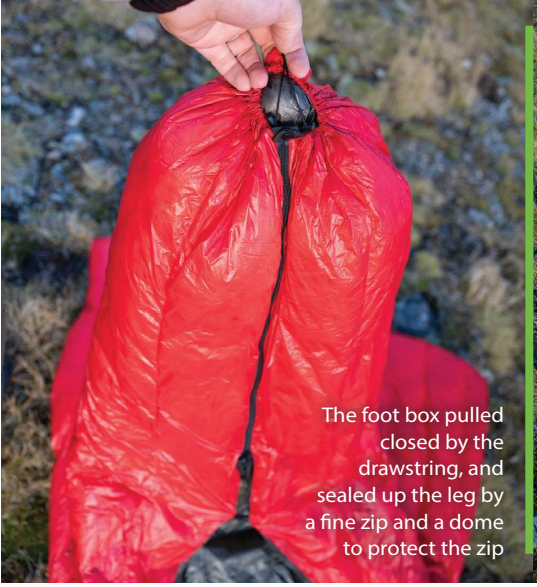
Blue shell
Comfort Rating = -5°C
Limit Rating = -12°C

Interestingly Kiwi Ultralight note. "Our comfort ratings are calculated for the average woman, male comfort ratings are up to 6C lower. We choose the higher number to ensure comfort, but this information may be useful for comparison with other products."

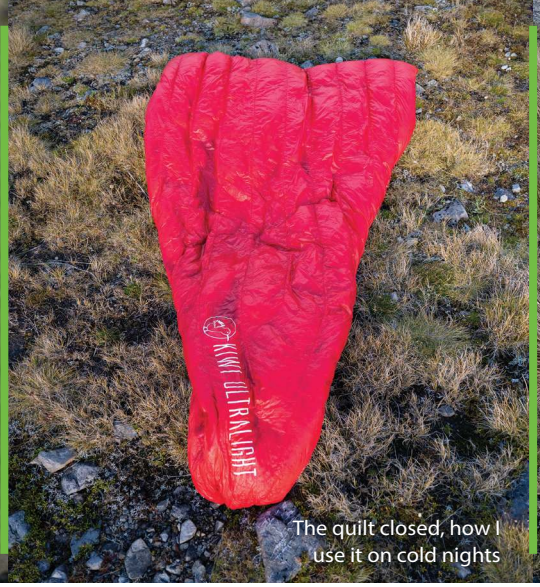
All of the bags use 850FP ethically sourced (third party verified) goose down packed in a highly breathable 10D nylon outer shell. **Crucially they are box-baffle sewn, not stitched right through, so you don't get cold spots between the baffles.** They all come with a stuff sack, storage sack, and pad straps for holding it down against the mattress. They offer two sizes of straps, one for sleeping pads, and one for DOC hut mattresses.

I went for the 0 degree (middle) option as I want to push into the shoulder seasons with this quilt, but maintain the weight savings. I really enjoyed the flexibility of this sleep system. Laid out flat I used it with great comfort on hot nights; be it on the hill, in the rooftop tent, or catching some Z's on the ferry. If you're pushing the limits temperature-wise there are a number of ways to ramp up the warmth.

Start by pulling the footbox drawstring and buttoning it closed, an extraordinary amount of heat is lost through your feet (and head, always wear a beanie if you're



The foot box pulled closed by the drawstring, and sealed up the leg by a fine zip and a dome to protect the zip



The quilt closed, how I use it on cold nights



The quilt open, how I use it on warm nights

trying to maintain body temperature). Next you can close up the knee button for a tighter fit around your legs. If it's really cold, you want to ensure you have the pad straps on. If you don't, every time you move or roll over in the night you'll lose precious warmth. **With this system the pad straps are elastic, pulling it nice and snug but allowing you the freedom to roll over without being too constricted.** If you want to really minimize drafts some people place their tapered sleeping mat inside the quilt.

You can push well into shoulder seasons if you pair it with a sleeping bag liner. I'm a fan of the merino ones like Bloodline gear do, but there are lighter options on the market too. Using a quilt and a liner gives you a modular sleeping system, meaning you can run ultralight on warm nights, or pack the liner if you're pushing it in to autumn or earlier in spring. This is why I went for the minus 6 option, as I can gain the weight benefits over summer, and beef it up with a liner as I push further into the roar.

Obviously a decent sleeping mat is a must to make this system work. Kiwi Ultralight note "With all sleep systems, it's critical that your pad has the proper R-value for the season (we recommend R-value 3-4 for 3 seasons)". I used a Thermarest Neoair Xlite, regular, with an R value of 4.5. This weighs in at 380gm, so combined with my 665g quilt (including strap and sack) my whole sleeping system is just over a kilo! You could shave more off that with pads like the Uberlite if you're hunting in warmer conditions, and also using the lighter quilt. **You could easily lose 200 grams with that combination.** The weight savings are impressive, and I was mighty thankful for them trying to keep up with Emil on my most recent outing with the quilt. A mad-dash overnighter into the Main Divide near Arthur's Pass. We arrived at the first hut at 1am, left at 6am, climbed to the tops and shot a stag by 3pm, stayed up high that night then walked out! But that's a story for another day.

After chatting with Cody about my exact requirements I opted to go for a full-length 200cm bag, as I do sleep on my stomach. I appreciated the extra length on especially cold nights, I could tuck it around my head and shoulders and not let drafts in. This model isn't made for midwinter alpine tahr hunts, though you can use them well into winter in huts. Cody did mention to me that custom options are available, so if you wanted to create a serious cold-weather quilt or just use some custom colours and patterns, it's all possible.

The concept of quilts can take some adjusting to, especially for cold sleepers, but there's no doubt I'm an absolute convert for early season trips. It's a game changer for summer hunting. I'll continue to push it in to the roar and see how we go with the 0 degree model. Regardless, if you're looking for an option to shave a serious amount of weight from your pack and want to support another awesome local company, check these guys out. They have some other interesting things in their range too, keep an eye out for what's coming next …

Head over to their website for pricing and tables showing weights for each size and comfort rating.

WWW.KIWIULTRALIGHT.CO.NZ

GUNWORKS LTD

SHOP ONLINE WITH GUNWORKS www.gunworks.co.nz

35mm SPARTAN
$360 + Fitting $85

41mm SPARTAN
$400 + Fitting $85

41mm MAGNUM
$400 + Fitting $85

50mm MAXIMUS STANDARD
$440 + Fitting $85

50mm MAXIMUS MEGA
$500 + Fitting $85

ALL BASES COVERED WITH THE GUNWORKS SUPPRESSOR RANGE:

35MM, 41MM AND 50MM

See our extensive range of projectiles, scope mounts, brass, live ammunition etc

BOLT FLUTING	$158
BARREL FLUTING	$330
TIKKA T3 & T3X HALFCOCK FROM	$130
REBARRELLING FROM	$1300
MILL T3 & T3X RECIEVER	$130
TRIGGER WORK MOST BOLT ACTIONS	$85
TIKKA T3 & T3X RECOIL LUGS	$35
TIKKA T3 & T3X LA BOLT STOP	$75

Robbie and Amanda Tiffen
Professional Gunsmithing since 1983

PHONE 03 342 1001
9AM - 5PM MONDAY - FRIDAY,
LATE NIGHT TUESDAY TIL 6PM
gunsmith@gunworks.co.nz
www.gunworks.co.nz



SWAROVSKI'S BABY RANGEFINDER
THE 10X32 EL RANGE

WRITTEN BY ~ GREG DULEY

My favourite binoculars for mountain hunting for many years were Swaroski's 10x32 ELs. Pre rangefinding binocular days those little ELs accompanied me on many adventures all over NZ's remotest back country

They gave up only a few minutes of light at the end of the day and I was more than happy to make that sacrifice for the weight and bulk saving they provided.

And then came the EL Ranges with the integral rangefinder which became such a game changer, binos without one just didn't cut the mustard anymore! When I bought the first set of these, Willie tried them once then promptly sold my 10x32 ELs to buy himself a set of EL Ranges!

We've been hounding Swarovski for years about bringing out some 10x32 EL Ranges, for all the reasons the earlier binoculars in that size were so popular. **They had always said they would struggle to fit all the electronics and laser transmitter/ receiver in a smaller chassis without significant compromises to either optical performance, rangefinder performance, or both.**

In the meantime the 10x42 EL Ranges have gone through a couple of iterations and just got better and better. The latest version with HD Fluorite glass is really at the top of the heap with only the NL Pure's being better optically. Now the 12x42 NL's are our gold standard when we really need to see what's around.

Then out of the blue last year, long after we thought Swarovski had given up on the baby rangefinder option, we got sent the pre-production model of just that! Those Austrians keep things very close to their chest…

Spec wise how do the 10x32s stack up against the outstanding 10x42s? Here's the comparison: first up, weight - 680gms/24ozs verses 925gms/32ozs. Next, size – the 32s are 26mm/1" shorter, 5mm narrower and 10mm thinner. The latest technology electronics are more compact and hence only one barrel has a bulge to contain them. The eye relief is 16mm, 3mms shorter, possibly noticeable for eye glass wearers? The field of view is 8% less and the twilight factor 12% lower. The rangefinder is rated to a maximum of 1500m verses 2000m for the big brother.

The 10x32s have the same function options – Tracking Assistant, compass, inclinometer, atmospheric data, customized load ballistics, display brightness – and the menu to access them is the same. **The mode button is a mirror of the ranging button,**





The 10x42 EL Range (L) compared to the compact 10x32mm EL Range (R)

Resolution	Flatness of Field	Twilight Performance	Glare	FoV m/1000m	Weight	RRP
9.5	9.25	9	9.5	110	680gm/24oz	$5330

one on either side on top of the centre bridge, instead of underneath as in the previous models. You can change which button does the ranging, depending on whether you are right or left handed, which is absolute gold for a bow hunter. The close focusing distance of 5m is the same as the big brothers and again ideal for bowhunters. The chassis is of the single centre bridge style like the NLs and CLs, not the twin bridge of the big brother ELs. Ergonomically everything else is as you'd expect from Swarovski, with the same lens covers, straps and the excellent horizontally stored/slung pouch.

Optically speaking, the baby ELs have HD Fluorite glass, but not the Swarovision Field Flattener lenses, as Swarovski felt that would add more weight and the whole purpose of the baby EL range is to minimise that. **Interestingly I could not really detect a lower flatness of field score on the optical test, due I think to the smaller lenses diameter and narrower field of view.** They were half a pattern down on the daylight resolution test, and only a little more in the twilight test which was intriguing as I expected them to suffer more in low light than they did. They passed everything else optically with flying colours.

The rangefinder is a split second slower to acquire the range than its bigger brother, but not annoyingly so. As the specs say, it won't range as far as it either, and this was also noticeable at ranges inside its listed maximum in less than optimal conditions. Its range capabilities appeared to be back about 30% on big brothers. All the other rangefinder functions worked as expected, so no surprises there.

Well, we got what we asked for. We now have a lightweight compact rangefinding option that will be just what the doctor ordered for extreme wilderness hunts, but with the usual minimal compromises when you choose the lightest weight options. **Since we've now experienced the superb game finding abilities of the 12x42 NL Pures, the next thing on the wish list for Swarovski is how about a 12x42 EL Range, for when we really want to have our cake and eat it too!**







INFIRAY

WRITTEN BY ~ JOHNNY BISSELL

TH50 V2 TUBE SCOPE+ ILR-1200-1 LASER RANGE FINDER

Thermal scopes have come a long way in a short space of time. It wasn't that long ago that they were monstrous in comparison to current versions, and to be frank they didn't even look like a scope

Things have changed quickly, and we now have scopes that mount to the rifle with standard rings and bases and essentially feel quite similar to look through. Enter the TH50 V2 tube scope.

First impressions when taking this scope out of the box were that it looks and feels very much like a lot of regular dial up optical scopes that a lot of hunters are happily carrying around the hills these days. The key difference here is that this is a digital scope and as such, the sighting in and 'operating' process is a bit different. The scope was mounted to my regular night work rifle, a Remington Model 7 308. A set of high see through rings are supplied with the scope as standard, which is a nice touch, but I opted to use a lower set of rings for a better cheek weld when shooting. This created a minor issue with the LRF QD mount, in that I couldn't remove it once on the scope, but this was not an issue as I didn't intend to remove it.

In a nutshell, what a resolution of 640x512, NETD of sub 25mk and frame rate of 50Hz means is that the picture on this scope is very clear and steady. Very! Now that you have those imprinted in your memory, I want to touch on a couple of key features I found with this scope.

Ultra Clear Mode

Essentially this is a setting that puts more energy in to thermal detection over clarity of the background picture. Its purpose is to assist the hunter on nights where the weather and atmospherics such as drizzle or fog, makes identification more challenging. You can activate or deactivate this feature by scrolling through the menu and it is quick and simple to do. For me, once I had used ultra clear, I never took it off again. I found it especially useful at the start of the night's work when latent heat signatures were everywhere from the day's sun. Ultra clear enabled me to define what is and isn't an animal more easily at this time of the night. I suggest that you try the setting and decide what works best for you.

Magnification and Turret Change

As noted, the scope has a magnification range of 3.5 – 14x. I found this to be perfectly adequate and at no point did I need more (or less). What I like about the TH50 is that the magnification change is done through twisting the turret. Tactile and similar to a traditional scope. In the field it was simple and quick to do, and the image tracked really well through the magnification changes. I much preferred this to changing magnification through a button press.

Batteries and Charging

The TH50 V2 comes with both an inbuilt battery of 6600mAh and a removable and rechargeable 18500 battery. What this means is that you can start the night's work with a solid amount of charge and the ability to top up through carrying additional charged batteries as well. The inbuilt battery is recharged via a USBC port contained under the right hand turret cap. This same port is used to connect your scope to your laptop to download video and images. Too easy. I found after a night's work that it was easy to plug the scope in and put the battery in a charger and be ready to go again the following night. Charge time was quick. If you really needed to, you could also recharge a battery via a power bank or cigarette lighter attachment while working.

The scope also has a good 'stand by' function that is achieved through holding the power button down and taking your finger off before the countdown reaches zero. This means that the battery charge is prolonged significantly. The scope is turned back on quickly by a short press of the power button. The nature of night shooting often means that there is time to do this without risking losing an animal. The scope can be left on for spells where it might be needed quickly.

Photos and Video

The TH50 V2 has an inbuilt memory of 32GB and the camera button is nicely placed on the rear objective for quick and easy access. A long press gives you video, and a short press a photo. I found that the photo had a



The TH50V2 Tube Scope



The laser ranefinder unit

slight lag, so it was important to hold the rifle steady till it was taken. It wasn't an issue. The camera and video function is great for recreational and professional hunters alike and it would serve as a very useful tool for professionals at times. You will use a lot more battery if filming everything though. One point to note, that is mentioned quite a bit online, is that the picture quality sits a bit below what you see on screen. I noticed this too. So, photos in this review will be less than what you can expect when operating the unit. Some features on the scope don't appear on the photo either, the LRF setting and range reading being one such example.

The scope also has a built-in microphone which worked well and the sound bites were clear. It is important to manage people's language around you while shooting as the mic will pick everything up! One thing I will note is that, as with any decent mic, wind can be an issue.

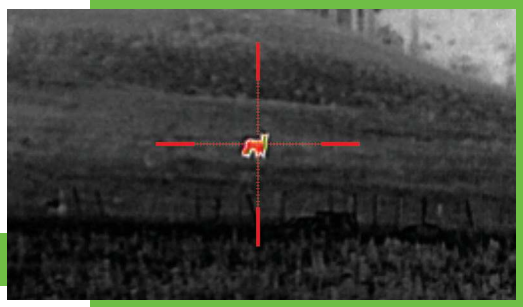

USB-C port and on off switch for LRF


The menu and magnification adjustment turret


Quick access buttons on the rear objective

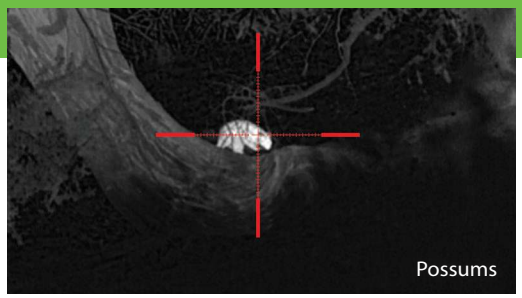
InfiRay Outdoor App

This is worth noting and serves as a reminder about just how far technology has advanced in recent years. To anyone purchasing this scope, I would recommend a visit to the InfiRay NZ web site and consider downloading the app. You will then be able to link your phone and the unit via Bluetooth, as well as install any updates in the unit as they become available. As well as other features. Quite handy




Deer at 330m using two different colour options




Possums

InfiRay ILR-1200-1 Laser Range Finder

As well as the TH50 V2 tube scope, InfiRay NZ sent us a laser range finding attachment to trial alongside the scope. This wee LRF is designed specifically to work with InfiRay V1 and V2 tube scopes. It attaches to the scope physically via a QD clamp mount, which was easy to use and install. It is run on a 3.7v rechargeable battery. The unit connects to the scope via Bluetooth, and set up, calibration and connection were easy to do. Once again, this is a physical then digital adjustment, so just follow the instructions and watch a You Tube clip. It's easy.

You have several options with this unit. Continuous feed or manual. I preferred continuous scan hands down, as it removed something else to do when on an animal. Just carry a spare battery in case. Once the LRF is set up as per requirements, you will have a laser box that shows up on your scope screen. You can choose where this is and I opted for it to the right of the crosshair, but on the same horizontal axis.

When I first set the unit up, I will be honest and say that it felt like a bad 'add on' and mucked with the streamlined look of the scope. Within a short space of time though, I almost didn't notice it. I had the LRF on the right hand side of the scope and it didn't catch on anything when I had the rifle slung on my shoulder. I had no issues. If you are running a thermal viewer that doesn't have LRF, then this wee unit would be gold. Estimating the range of your target is really difficult at night and having some form of LRF is vital. I had LRF on the FH35R V2 that I was (and still am) using and I wondered if this LRF would be that useful. In a nutshell



Scanning for the first customers of the evening on the job as night starts to fall

The heat sticker for sighting in

DETECTOR RESOLUTION	640 x 512
DISPLAY	2560 x 2560 AMOLED
DETECTION RANGE	2600m
MAGNIFICATION	3.5 ~ 14.0 Optical Zoom
OBJECTIVE LENS	50mm
PIXEL PITCH	12µm
FRAME RATE	50Hz
FIELD OF VIEW	8.8°×7.0°
NETD	≤25mk
EYE RELIEF	50mm
WEIGHT	<950g (ex. batt. & LRF)
DIMENSIONS	365 x 85 x 75mm
MAX BATTERY LIFE	8.5 hours
BUILT-IN MEMORY	32GB

it really was. Being able to set up for the shot and do a final range check and calculation without having to swap back to my viewer was super useful. It made me that much quicker. I checked the accuracy of the unit against two other proven range finders and it came up with the same distance readings.

I have been told that Hunting and Fishing are currently running a deal where you get the LRF unit (valued at $895) free with every V2 tube scope purchased. This is a great deal.

SET UP AND SIGHTING IN

The scope was easy to mount in the 30mm rings and get level and set for eye relief. This was very much like a standard scope. For new entrants into the world of digital scopes, the key difference to an optical scope is when it comes to sighting in. I won't fill the article with the how to here, as there are a lot of how to videos online. What I do recommend though is that that you give yourself a morning to do it quietly and methodically, but remember, if I can do this then you can too.

Essentially you need to select and save your sight in range, reticle choice and view. The second two can be changed any time without losing zero. InfiRay supply some great little stick-on heat patches that show up nicely at 100m, which is what I sighted my rifle in at. The challenge arose when trying to see the bullet hole. I ended up using a second patch on the bullet hole and this worked fine. To sight in, you fire a careful shot, freeze the view (optional) and go into the menu where you can move your reticle on the X and Y axis (up and down). Place your reticle on the aiming point and move the cross hair to the bullet hole. I got a bit fancier here, as I wanted to hit 50mm above the aiming point. This was easy to do. The key is that it takes a bit of time to learn and then you are away. Pick a cold day if you can, as the heat makes it harder.

Your profile must then be saved and you can save a number of options in this scope. A,B,C,D etc. This is really handy if using different loads for different jobs or running the scope on QD mounts and swapping between rifles. So handy. The profile being used shows up at the bottom of the sight picture/ screen. So, the bottom line is that you can buy a really good thermal scope such as this and you only need one. Or you can use a rifle with a conventional scope and then swap the TH50 V2 on to it for night work. Nice.

ON THE JOB

The unit got a good workout on animal control work and delivered everything I needed and wanted. I had one small glitch at the start of a run when I accidentally put the zero setting on the wrong profile (B instead of A) and missed the first two shots at a deer. I still can't figure out how I did that and it hasn't happened since. After a very red face, I figured out the issue and the rest of the night went without hitch. I have comfortably taken shots on deer out to 350m with this unit. I could shoot a lot further with these optics, but my cut off distance with the 308 at night is the limiting factor, not the scope. Out of interest I also took small mammal pests such as possums and feral cats with the unit and I found it precise and consistent. The magnification was quick and easy to crank up and down and the image stayed clear and consistent throughout. Field of view was great at lower power. I would often run the scope on low power to get deer at longer range in view and then wind up the power for the shot. Dust and rain were not an issue either with the IP67 rating. My preference is to carry the rifle slung until needed. It is not a light unit all up, without being crazy heavy. I have seen standard daytime rigs weighing a lot more.

The standby function on the scope worked well for me here and I could often do a solid night's work without a battery change.

In conclusion, I really enjoyed using the TH50 V2. It was easy to operate, reliable and the adjustments were intuitive. I hate gear that doesn't work. This was certainly not one of those times.

***Thermal equipment is not permitted on public land. Refer to DOC Permit Condition 4 - "Hunting with any night vision equipment, thermal imaging, infrared or heat detecting devices." This means during the daytime too, don't get caught out!**



meopta

MEOSPORT R
3-15×50 RD SFP

A feature packed entry level scope, the MeoSport R features 5x zoom, a 30 mm tube, 90 MOA of adjustment travel, and parallax adjustment from 10 yards to infinity. Featuring our MeoBright lens coatings, this riflescope is ideal for the budget-minded hunter who requires both quality and dependability.



MEOPTA NEW ZEALAND LIFETIME WARRANTY

FEATURES

- → Zero-reset exposed turrets with locking
- → Side focus from 10 yds to infinity
- → Ring mounts (height 38.1 mm) included
- → 1/10 MRAD adjustments

Proudly distributed by KILWELL

WORKSHOP INNOVATION (2017) LIMITED

OUR PHILOSOPHY IS FOR YOU AS A RELOADER AND HOME GUNSMITH TO ACHIEVE THE BEST POSSIBLE RESULTS.

OUR GOAL IS TO BE THE BEST RELOADING AND GUNSMITHING TOOLS SITE IN AUSTRALASIA.

NEW ZEALAND'S FAVOURITE RELOADING & HOME GUNSMITHING SUPPLIES STORE

ORIGINAL FORSTER BONANZA CO-AX PRESS

THE SIMPLEST, MOST POWERFUL AND MOST ACCURATE PRESS ON THE MARKET, BAR NONE.

AWESOME FOR FULL LENGTH RESIZING – NO STUCK CASES.



WE STOCK MOST MAJOR BRANDS, IF WE DON'T HAVE IT, WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO GET IT!

021 747 831
sales@workshopinnovation.co.nz
www.workshopinnovation.co.nz
www.reloadingdirect.co.nz



CUDDEBACK L SERIES MESH NETWORK TRAIL CAMERAS

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

Cuddeback is an American brand of cameras not yet seen in New Zealand and imported by Owl Optics

Cuddeback is based in Wisconsin, an area synonymous with whitetail hunting and we all know how clever the grey ghost can be!

The CuddeLink cameras come with an edge on the competition. Not conventional cameras, not cellular, but a private wireless mesh network where up to 23 cameras send their information to a home network.

We're using the latest generation, the L series. These cameras are the pro-level system of cellular cameras. They create a mesh network allowing you to have eyes on multiple parts of your hunting area from one home camera, and ultimately they will be able to send them directly to your phone once the cellular module is rated for NZ networks. It's not here yet, but once that unit is here (soon, Fraser tells me) they will be an amazing tool for understanding your hunting area.

The cameras are just shy of a kilo, which is to be expected with 4x D batteries! They're certainly a significant weight if you're setting up a few cameras, but with the battery life and transmission it's not like you will be shifting them every week.

While these cameras are more expensive than a traditional stationary camera, they are cheaper than cellular cameras. And that saving is multiplied if you set up a network, so not only do you get a camera network that can communicate without cell reception (or one day soon, send it all back to one high point with reception) you can do it much cheaper than buying multiple cellular cameras.

Despite lack of cellular currently they do offer a significant advantage in areas where you don't get cell reception. Which is where so many hot spots are. A lot of feed and rest areas and wallows are down in gullies, while the best reception is at high points. With cellular you'll have the best of both worlds but currently the Cuddelink system lets you check on areas with no signal without scenting it up. Imagine how crucially useful this will be for checking activity in Sika pads without having to step foot on them. Fallow especially, as big bucks often cruise between doe groups within an area looking for cycling does. You'll be able to check which one he has been at before you commit to a stalk and disturbing it with your scent. Groundbreaking tech.

NUTS AND BOLTS

The linking of the cameras adds a layer of complexity to setup, but the manual is detailed and clear English. I worked my way through setting up two cameras, one 'home' and one 'remote' in about half an hour and set it up for a test run around the house. I'm not sure if I'm lucky or good but it ran flawlessly the first time around. The camera inputs are tedious though, a decent LCD screen would make navigation and setup much easier, but it would also increase the price – we can't have it all!

The 'link' (image transmission) leapfrogs along the network of cameras, so the camera closest to the unit will have to pass on its own images as well as all of the others. I only had one camera to use so it wasn't an issue for me, but other users have reported that you want to keep the link strength high on these closer cameras with higher volumes of transfers.

You've got plenty of options for tuning trigger sensitivity with 7 settings. I almost never use anything more than medium as you get birds and waving branches clogging up your camera. With proper placement you can usually use low settings to reduce non-target animals. Deer and pigs are big, warm critters. The ¼ second trigger speed is good, not class-

leading, but sensible placement will make it ample.

Image quality is fairly poor, coming out at 72dpi and around 2-400kb. It's plenty good enough to see what a stag or buck has going on, but I did wish for a little more resolution to try and see what sort of tusks a pig had. The upside is that you can store thousands of images on smaller, cheaper cards. I used 32gb cards and they lasted months. Bear in mind that the date format is the ridiculous American month/day/year. Also note that the images received via transfer will be smaller, only about 50kb, than what is stored on the original camera card.



The PTL mount provides a very secure platform and a great range of movement. Much more reliable than wedging sticks behind the straps!

Transmission range

The cameras use radio waves to transmit data, so you will have some level of intuitive understanding from using UHF walkie talkies. They will not transmit from one side of a ridge to another, but they will retain a high 'link level' (transmission strength) from one high point to another with no intervening ridges, structures or heavy canopy. We had passable transmission (20%) when 500m apart in heavy cover and down a valley without direct line of sight, and up to a kilometre when apart in open country across a gully. The network is effectively limited to a catchment unless you link cameras in stages to work around a ridge.

Image size is essentially fixed, it has 'Large' mode, and then 'Extra Large'. Extra Large are an interpolated image, so they're better than large but it's done by pixel wizardry rather than any sensor adjustment. The 850nm IR lamp provides solid performance though, with great image clarity out to 15m in the dark.

Despite poor connections in our testing, down to 15% depending on the conditions, it successfully transferred every image.

I check the cards on my cameras with a phone card reader as we're going hunting. Unfortunately this is one scenario Android wins over Apple, Apple won't read the subfolders for the 'remote' cameras meaning you have to swap the card out in the 'home' camera to see what's happeing if you use an Iphone.





Here you can see the minimalist screen and navigation controls

If you are using a card reader successfully it works really well in a couple of scenarios. One, on pig dumps, especially when you have multiple dumps. In the morning I can check one card on my card reader and know where to head. Secondly, in the rut. I'll have them placed on multiple wallows and check what's been happening as I arrive in the morning. I know these would be phenomenal in one of my local public land spots. I've zoned in on the feed areas and wallows I've discovered spread over a wide area, I'm just not sure I trust my fellow hunters enough to have multiple $450 cameras out there without security. While highly useful on public land, these cameras



Image quality balanced card space considerations and file size well. With 2-400kb photos you can store thousands on a memory card



We'd been keeping an eye on this good pig on the cameras. We finally caught up with him not long before print on a rainy morning and he went 167lb, a good way to start the year's pig hunting!





would be a godsend for people hunting private land blocks regularly. There's no better tool for knowing where the deer are on any given day, keeping tabs on trophies, and having eyes on the block for uninvited guests.

Having a proper high res LCD viewer screen would be really handy until the cell module arrives, and it would make navigating the settings much easier. Trying to teach Dad to use a card reader is a step too far when he's only just mastered a smartphone, and there are many people who could check my cameras for me as they work on the block but it's just a bit difficult. What I've done in Dad's case is give him a spare SD card, so he just swaps it out and gets Mum to check them on the computer at home!

Mounting System

The Genius PTL Mount (Pan, Tilt, Lock) is an interesting quick release mount system. It allows for the classic pull-strap fixing, or screwing the mount to a tree so you could make it very secure. The cameras are a heavy unit with the 4D batteries, equivalent to 32 AA's, so this might be worthwhile. These D batteries are a cost effective way to go, as depending on use and conditions they should last 3-6 months. The PTL mount was fantastic for making use of trees for mounting. Much better than jamming sticks behind to try get the correct angle! And it meant you could tuck the camera in safer spots, like the image above where I was worried about stray cattle scratching on the post.

You can also purchase a metal safe covering for protection from theft or damage. This would be great for your home unit, as you would usually set this up at a more accessible point. You could even use it as security at the front of a property and the others in your network as game cameras.

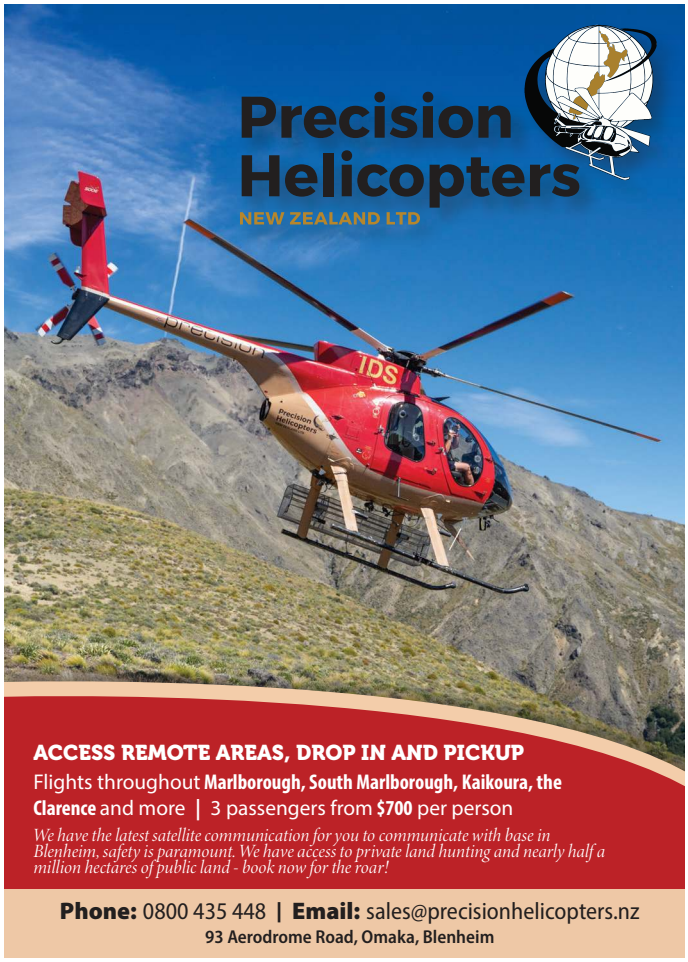
Each camera has a 1-year warranty, increasing to 2 if you register them online.

These cameras fill a great niche between traditional cameras and cellular cameras. The pricing is fair, balancing the brilliant role of image transmission without cellular coverage with the tricky navigation without a screen. Once that cell module arrives they'll be in a league of their own.

DTS
WALK-IN CHILLERS AND FREEZERS
From $8,687.90*
With a proven track record for quality and reliability, these durable walk-in chiller rooms can be assembled anywhere, by anyone.
✓ Easy to build ✓ Pre-wired ✓ No technician required


ORDER YOURS TODAY | 0800 500 387 | WWW.DTS.CO.NZ
*Excluding GST







KOSTYLE CANYON ITALY 2.8mm leather, full length shank, 360 rand EVENT 30,000 waterproof liner with extra heel reinforcments. EVA closed cell midsole for the ultimate in durability ~~$710~~ $485.
BESTARD Gore-tex & NZ time proven best reliability and comfort. For work/ hunt/ tramp/ mountaineering/ chainsaw. Resoling $185+
TASHEV SOCKS made in Europe, NZ wool & polymide, save 50%.



TASHEV PACKS light weight construction, adjustable for length frame. Made in Europe with top quality and very durable German Cordura.
MANLY German D2/60 HRC steel tempered knives. Save 50%.
MERCATOR Germany genuine legendary pocket knives, NZ best prices
TURBAT Ukrainian Goose down sleeping bags, Swiss tested, Save 45%.
ALLHONE ultralight 32 gram fine edge honer.
Online **www.BOOTSandGEAR.nz** Store 85 Kaihua rd Taupo

THE FOX GLACIER STORE

GLACIER COUNTRY FOOD & SUPPLIES
THE FOX GLACIER STORE

CALLING ALL HUNTERS!

IF YOU'RE TRAVELLING SOUTH TO THE BACKBLOCKS OF WESTLAND, WHETHER IT BE FOR TAHR, CHAMOIS, OR STAGS, REMEMBER YOUR MOUNTAIN FOOD SUPPLIES CAN BE CATERED FOR BY US AT YOUR POINT OF DEPARTURE, AT ANY TIME OF THE YEAR!

We cater for all hunting supplies from our Fox Glacier village store. Fresh, frozen and freeze dried are all part of our service to the men and women that hunt the wilds of South Westland, our service is personalised to suit your individual needs – including beverages and cooking gas.

Email or phone and we will organise all your highcountry food requirements. Suitably packaged for helicopter transportation and you can collect on your way past.

Please provide a cellular phone number upon making first contact via our email ordering service.

thefoxglacierstore@gmail.com
Valerie: 027 508 0910



First Lite LZ Jacket

WRITTEN BY ~ **LUKE CARE**

Typha is a new line from First Lite specifically for waterfowlers, with it's own camouflage pattern

The LZ Jacket is arguably the flagship garment of the line. A hard-wearing, waterproof, waterfowl specific shell jacket.

It has huge pockets, a deep, stowable hood and spectacular ergonomics - as you'd expect from First Lite. The hood fits very well, showing the watefowling heritage with special attention paid to maintain your lateral vision, allowing you to keep an eye on circling birds as you put your head down. The stiff, foldable peak works well. When flipped back, it doesn't direct the rain into your face, and when forward it acts like a brimmed hat. It also includes a nice high collar so you can hide away from the elements when you're on the bike or boat in rough weather.

The LZ is made to be part of a system, particularly with waders or bibs, so is kept nice and short and includes an adjustable wading belt. This allows you to hike the jacket up and keep it out of the water in deep sections.

It has one internal pocket, one magnetic-flap caller pocket on the right side of the chest and a more secure zip on the left. Both chest pockets have lateral handwarmer pockets behind, as well as zips for accessing wader chest pockets. Below those are two enormous magnetic 'dump' pockets, they're huge, you can fit over a box of shells in each one if you really want to pack the firepower.

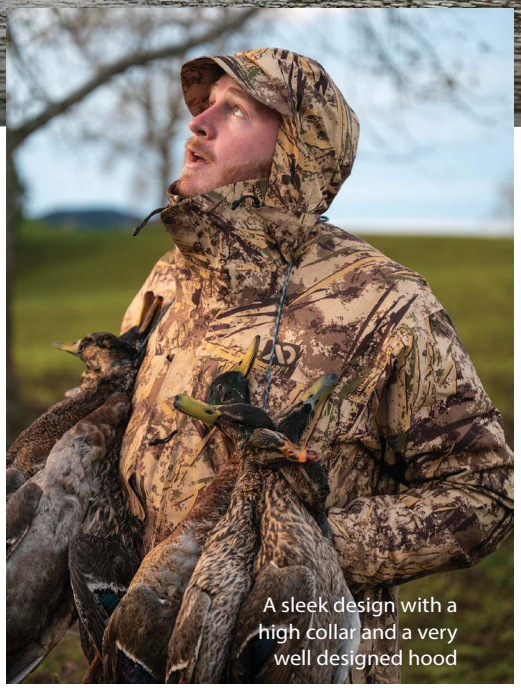
The magnetic pockets awesome; easy to navigate with gloves and snap closed so the pockets seal themselves when you're rushing for callers, more ammo, or your phone. With the big flaps they're very quick to open and easy to use. **Also, there's no zips or domes to get clogged or jammed.**

Underneath the arms are ventilation zips, and you can also open the wader access pockets for a bit of extra air flow. The cuffs are a nice sleek design, a simple flap and Velcro fasterner.

On the front, above the dump pockets, are two reinforced plastic D loops - for towing decoys, hanging birds, boat kill switches, whatever you like. A nice utilitarian touch.

Some serious thought has gone in to this range, and this jacket, by waterfowlers. Down to the black 'casting stripes' under the arms so your dogs can clearly see your direction commands. It's a sign of the level of thought in the product and makes sense if you look at someone moving around in Typha camo against raupo or maize stubble. Typha is a light colour palette, superbly suited to raupo, stubble and winter willows.

Even though it's a short coat, it includes a two-way main zip. You can ease the pressure on the hem if you're lying back in a blind, or zip upwards to access your waders without opening right up to the elements.



A sleek design with a high collar and a very well designed hood

The LZ has some serious specifications, with a waterproofing rating of 39,000mm (39 metres of head!) and an R.E.T breathability rating of 6-12. There is so much smoke and mirrors when it comes to these ratings, but it was pleasing to hear this jacket was tested as a finished garment, not a material specification.

The LZ is a very well thought out jacket with a superb cut for shooting, great materials and thoughtful design. Despite having a plethora of pockets and zips it remains sleek and comfortable. **A superb foray into the waterfowling market from First Lite, as you would expect. Check it out at:**

WWW.POINTSSOUTH.CO.NZ
RRP $699

FIRST LITE

INDUSTRY LEADING APPAREL

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY AT POINTSSOUTH.CO.NZ

Glacier
Southern Lakes Helicopters

E: info@glaciersouthernlakes.co.nz

P: 03 442 3016

For all your hunting and fishing requirements in the Central Otago and Southern Lakes regions

The only helicopter company to have exclusive landing rights for the Greenstone, Caples and Mararoa rivers, so get in touch for your upcoming Fallow ballot blocks

www.glaciersouthernlakes.co.nz

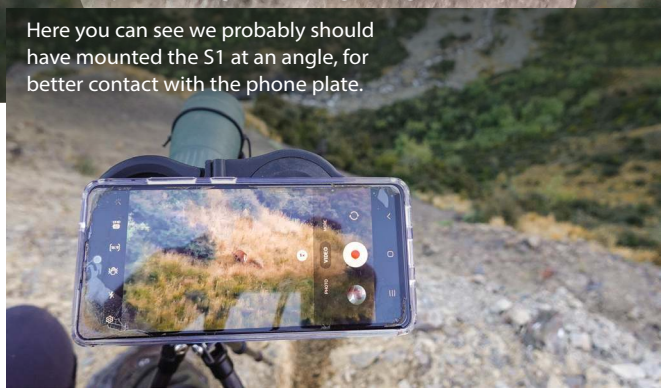
MAGVIEW S1 SPOTTER ADAPTOR

WRITTEN BY ~ **LUKE CARE**



The S1 provides a low profile design with more flexibility than conventional phone case attachments

A pre-roar stag with some growing to do



Here you can see we probably should have mounted the S1 at an angle, for better contact with the phone plate.

Magview is pretty new on the scene, developed in 2021 by two hunting friends who happened to be engineers

An American company; designed, manufactured and assembled in the USA, they've only recently arrived in NZ. Advanced Archery sent us the S1 to test out.

It's an innovative take on the modern day problems of attaching a phone to an optic, namely spotting scopes and binoculars.

Conventional systems require a bulky shroud to press fit over the objective of your chosen optic. This is a cumbersome attachment on your phone, which has had millions of dollars spent on the ergonomics before you go adding a big chunk of plastic to the back! It gets in the way while using the phone, gets stuck in pockets, you can't attach the phone to car cradles, everyone filming needs a unique case for their phone - the list goes on.

What Magview have done is use a very powerful rare-earth magnet to attach your phone to the optic objective. The lens cap is now a permanently fitted Magview magnet, and this sticks to a super slim stainless steel plate which is stuck to the back of your phone (or case) via adhesive. This is a much sleeker system, you don't even know it's there.

In practice, you have to line things up fairly carefully as you drop the phone in place. Watch through the viewer and ensure the image is centred as you lower the phone. The magnet is extremely powerful, so you want to line it up well as you lower the phone. In the last few millimetres before the lens the magnet will take over and thump the phone in to place. We had some reservations about the stability of the phone when filming landscape (with the phone hanging right out to the side) using this system but the magnet is well up to the task.

A huge advantage of this system is for phones with multiple lenses. In a conventional case you had to select which lens to use and it would be permanent for that case, with the S1 you can affix it to work with whichever lens you like at that time.

The S1 comes with four sizing rings and three eye-relief plates so that you can get the vignetting (the black bits creeping in on the side) tuned right for your optic/phone combo. If you mount the plate on a phone case then you will have a greater distance (the thickness of the case) between the spotter objective and the phone lens, so you can account for that with the eye-relief plates – and not all spotters have the same eye-relief. The sizing rings are spacers to allow for different eyepiece diameters. Both plate and spacer have an indexing gap to align with in the S1 to allow for movement and to stop them rotating.

Mount the S1 to the spotter objective by tightening the allen key. Depending on where the lens is on your phone, you may want to set the S1 to be sitting at a 4 o'clock position rather than directly horizontal, to better line the plate up with the magnet.

If you're sharing the filming duties you can buy a three pack of the stainless steel plates for $35, so anyone on the trip can pick up the spotter and film. These plates will inhibit some wireless charging stations, but Magview sell a model of their own, made to stick to the phone via the same magnetic system.

Magview make two models, the S1 for spotting scopes and the B1 for binoculars. We only had time to test the S1, but the principle looks similar for the B1.

Both the S1 and B1 are sleek systems, making it easier than ever to capitalise on the ever-growing phone camera quality for photos at extended ranges.

ADVANCEDARCHERY.CO.NZ



MAGVIEW™

HAS LANDED AT
ADVANCED ARCHERY





ADVANCED ARCHERY

FRIENDLY & PROFESSIONAL STRAIGHT SHOOTERS



MATHEWS 2024
LIFT 33 BOW

Carol had carefully closed the gap from 150 to 25yards of this mature sika stag while he was bedded. Patiently waiting an hour and a half, the stag eventually stood up to check a distant roar and in an instant was standing just seven yards from Carol. After a three-minute stare down the stag moved off and out of sight. Unfortunately the stag never gave Carol an opportunity to draw her bow before it moved away. While a shot hadn't been fired it had truly been a memorable experience.

Go bowhunting.
Get better hunting stories.

Photo @mitchell_ewart_hunting

1. Lifetime Warranty of all major brand bows
2. FREE in store coaching with your new bow
3. FREE Fit-to-Shoot with your new bow Professionally customized to fit you
4. Service, support and ridiculously good custom bow strings and custom arrows
5. Helping bowhunters be more successful since 1995

SHOP ONLINE

ADVANCED ARCHERY NZ

AUCKLAND
Unit 18, 31-35
Normanby Road,
Mt Eden, Auckland.
Ph 09 636 6359

MARLBOROUGH
Contact 0275640893
for an appointment
facebook.com/AAMarlborough

WWW.ADVANCEDARCHERY.CO.NZ

facebook.com/advancedarchery
advancedarcherynz

Or ask your local hunting store for a Bowhunting Package.

INTRIGUE 02433- 03/24 NZH

LEGENDS OF THE CALL

WRITTEN BY ~ TRACEY MORROW

ON AN OPENING WEEKEND A FEW YEARS BACK, WE GOT TALKING ABOUT WATERFOWL CALLS AND HOW FAIRLY RECENTLY (LIKE A COUPLE OF DECADES AGO), THERE WERE BUT A HANDFUL OF CALLS YOU COULD BUY IN NEW ZEALAND. THOSE MADE IN THIS COUNTRY WERE EVEN LESS IN NUMBER. THE HUNTING STORES ONLY STOCKED A CHOSEN FEW BRANDS, OTHERWISE PURCHASES WERE MADE ONLINE FROM OVERSEAS CALL MAKERS.

Al on the lathe, where craftsmanship is king!



Young gun and seasoned hunter with a lanyard full

Now, the choice is endless with new manufacturers popping up all the time, most out of the USA. It got me thinking about our friend Alan Hammond and the exceptional calls Al has turned out over the last three decades.

Piece upon piece of handcrafted, perfected Hammond Game Call excellence, somewhere to the tune of 35,000 of them, sent out across the country and overseas. With approximately 30,000 waterfowl licence holders out there versus the Hammond calls sold, Al feels like he has a pretty good market share; I suggested market domination! **Al is extremely proud of the fact that he sells more of his calls than all other labels combined in New Zealand.** No mean feat for a one man band.

If you have ever visited Al at his home in Fruitlands, Central Otago and been privy to the mystery of "the shed", you will know that this great product has been turned out of the humblest of wood dust beginnings to a standard befitting the highest tech manufacturing plant. The shed is a compact version of a woodturners museum where everything looks out of place but is in its place, and the aroma of walnut wood shavings mixes infinitely well with linseed oil, coffee and cigarette smoke, aided and abetted with a good belting out of ACDC's Thunderstruck and Al's quality banter.

The conversation on opening weekend kept playing on my mind so I approached Al about writing up something of how Hammond Game Calls came to be. After all, the calls really do have a place in New Zealand waterfowling history (as Gary Girvan's recent book "Duck Calls" rightly acknowledged) and, for those who collect calls, one of Al's beautifully crafted pieces is a must-have for either the lanyard, display or both. I think his initial hesitancy about our chat was swayed ever so slightly by my appearance with a slab of rich fruit cake and the suggestion that we could "just chat" over a cup of coffee.

As a young man, Alan was a keen angler working at the Otautau Meat Works, but had never been duck hunting. His next-door neighbour invited him out one day, and he purchased a shotgun shortly after that first outing, thinking "this is the go". Later, as an orchardist in Millers Flat, he couldn't get out angling due to the workload at that time of the year, but come winter, when the trees were asleep he could duck hunt to his heart's content. **He was addicted and like all good waterfowlers, the obsession took a long and firm hold!** A few years on, around 1990, and his foray into making calls began.

Sometime back then, on a day hunting open water, Al's cousin produced a goose flute (possibly an Olt), a custom call which he had never seen before. He thought "f**k these are the go". Back in those days, calls were very rarely, if ever used. An Olt 66 or a shaker call was basically all you could buy back then. Because most of his hunting was on open water at that time, where "noise" was required he started modifying an Olt for volume, then started working out how to make his own duck call. **Al was making turned wooden bowls from fruitwood, supplementing the orchard income, so with a lathe set up already in place the transition into turning wooden calls began.** It took him three years to "get a sound"; he made a few, gave a few to mates and sold a couple here and there. It was the beginnings of the first Hammond Game Call, The Cajun.

On a trip to Dunedin Al's former wife, Elaine, and son Damien took a handful of the Cajuns to Scott Kunac, they were snapped up, and 150 calls were ordered and turned out that year for the market. It was 1994. Realising this could turn into "something substantial" the need for a quantity of wood arose. He was put in contact with an old guy up north who made walnut stocks for shotguns and who had six cubes of offcuts; a quick chat, dollars exchanged and it was heading south to Central Otago and production began. Yearly use of walnut is about 1.5 cubes so the next few years at least were accounted for. He played around with fruitwood but walnut has a milder sound


Hunter and Al - early days on the ice pond


Signature of a legend


The Hammond call factory


Calls aplenty, each a masterpiece

and is his main production wood.

With no internet back then he had to work everything out. "What I did was absolutely unique back then and I just quietly chipped away at it. I had a wee Faulks call (I still have it and won't part with it) and that was the original inspiration." (Faulks, based in Louisiana, still make hand-turned calls today). "I pulled it to bits, set it up with a slightly heavier reed, an O12 I think, and it went like a bomb". There's a lot of bullshit about duck calls, you know that", says Al with that knowing look on his face. "The best caller with the worst call will still be able to do the job because it's about the language"….they talk about cadence and speaking softly to the birds but who knows. One of Alan's favourite quotes is by renowned custom call maker Paul Kingyon (who passed away in 2011). "Loud calling never scared ducks off, bad calling does". 'Paul made three calls and I borrowed a wee idea of his and it's in my second call - the Mallard Big Water'.

There is a lot to choose from amongst Al's lineup now - Cajun, Mallard, Mallard Big Water, RIP and an RIP Single Reed - ('my nemesis" says Al), The Parrie, Traditional Long Reed Goose ("a casual users call"), Canada Flute, two different short reeds, a Big Bore ("caused me no end of trouble") and a Standard Bore, a Black Swan ("made by accident"), and last but not least the Grunt call for deer ("especially good on Fallow and got lots of requests after Anto Hall used one on a filmed hunt when an animal came in to within ten feet"). Each and every one clearly a meticulously crafted piece. There are many out there with a full set, not to mention the special commissions for which Al imports some seriously beautiful pieces of wood.

The shed has seen a few visitors over the years, and one wonders how this craftsman manages on a bitterly cold mid-winter Fruitlands day, with biting, below-zero cold and a hoar frost. "I once had a guy come over to go hunting, then he came and did a bit of work for me. I got him to sort the shed out, tidy up the shelves, swept out the sawdust and shavings (often ankle deep) and put it all into bags. The next morning (a cold one) he turned up and complained about the cold. I asked him where he put the wood shavings and we promptly emptied it all back onto the floor. The insulation was back. **Occasionally, things get lost in the sawdust but almost everything always turns up".**

Alan is incredibly generous with his time and often re-tunes calls that "have had an accident" (including one that came back with canine tooth marks!).

He has also given a number of young hunters the opportunity to come and make a call alongside him over the years, including our own lad who spent many, many a weekend learning the ropes from Al, over several years. An initial discussion they had back on day one led them to the conclusion that they were both "weird" and so fitted the call makers/waterfowlers mold perfectly. The knowledge of waterfowl, habitat and calling Al has imparted to so many folk over the years is well recognised, and I have no hesitation in stating that we credit much of Hunter's hunting finesse, understanding of waterfowl habits and language to him, and, is a testament to his success in the World Waterfowl Calling Championships in the USA.

Alan says opening days are still spent with his family and some of the season with friends. "By the time opening weekend rocks around, I'm too bloody tired to hunt from cranking out calls for months, I just fall asleep in the blind". Al says he might "get two or three" but, of course as we all know, the time with family in the spirit of opening day is the real pleasure. I have had the privilege of hunting with Alan a couple of times over the years and our lad has had many, many more. It is an experience.

I am off to visit Al tomorrow to see what he reckons about this article. We will have a cracking yarn about it, politics, the state of the roads and a few other things over a chunk of freshly baked fruit cake and a cup of coffee. We will choose the photos to go with the words because if there is one thing I know about Al, each and everything must be done right. We share the same liking for attention to detail and a bit of finesse in a finished product. There is no question that a Hammond call is a thing of beauty, from the hand-applied burnt-in signature to the carefully labelled custom boxes. **The waterfowling world is full of folk who are a legend in their own lunchtime but, without a shadow of a doubt, Alan is a true legend of the call.**

Benelli

BLACK EAGLE 3



OPTIFADE MARSH 12GA 28" $3,649

Black 12GA/20GA/28GA 28" **$3,449**

Max5 Camo 12GA 28" & 28GA 26/28" **$3,649**

The Black Eagle is equipped with the latest generation of Comfort system, patented by Benelli. Thanks to the Combtech technology the soft interchangeable combs perfectly fit any face configuration and minimize the hit and vibration on the hunter's cheek.
The ComforTech 3 is the most efficient system that significantly reduces recoil and muzzle climb, for more stability.

SUPER BLACK EAGLE 3



Benelli's flagship 3.5" semi-auto, a complete makeover

Tungsten Cerakote 12GA 28" **$4,299**
Max 5 Camo HD 12GA 26/28" & LH 28" **$4,199**
Black Synthetic 12GA 26/28" & LH 28" **$3,999**
Wood 12GA 28" **$3,999**



BE.S.T.

SBE 3 BE.S.T. 28" **$4,199**



M2 CERAKOTE OPTIFADE TIMBER 12G 28" $2,949

M2



M2 Black Synthetic Models
12GA 21/24/26 & 20GA 24/26/28" **$2,649**
LH 12GA 26/28" **$2,749**

M2 Max 5 Camo Models
12GA 26/28" **$2,849**
LH 12GA 28" **$2,949**

M2 Optifade Camo 12GA 28" **$2,849**

M2 Wood 12GA 28" **$2,549**

PUMP ACTION



NOVA
Black Synthetic 12GA 28" INT Choke **$1,049**

SUPERNOVA
Black Synthetic 12GA 28" CS **$1,199**
Max 5 Camo 12GA 28" CS **$1,399**

10 25 WARRANTY

THE BE.S.T. WARRANTY IN THE WORLD

From September 1st 2020 (valid only for firearms bought from Sept 1st 2020) Under the Benelli Warranties a new Benelli Armi firearm is warranted for 10 years from date of purchase against any defect in materials or workmanship in the metal parts ensuring its functioning at the terms and conditions set out below.

In addition, if your firearm is purchased during a promotional period as indicated on our website **www.benelli.it**, BE.S.T.- treated barrels and parts(available on specific models) are warranted against rust and corrosion for 25 years from date of purchase.

In order to be covered by the Benelli Warranties register your firearm online at **https://www.benelli.it/it/login** within 30 days from purchase. The warranty will be validated by the serial number of your firearm.

For full terms & conditions visit **www.benelli.it**

BERETTANEWZEALAND.COM

Hunting & Fishing® NEW ZEALAND

Photo Gallery

The winning photo receives a Hunting & Fishing voucher to the value of $100. Send all your photos to editor@nzhunter.co.nz

***Note:** Photos must be of a suitable size for printing - a minimum file size of 1MB is preferred.*

Grand Winner

Aidan Smallwood (11) with some of his first game birds using a 410 in the 2023 season



Aleisha Warneford (14) with her first deer. Shot in Waimana





George Weatherall (11) saved his pocket money to buy his first 410. Shooting on Lake Waipori, Otago with his Grandad, Uncle, Dad, bro and cousins



James Smith (11) shot his first possum with a Sterling 22 in Southland



Ryan Moore (10) with his first duck, shot with a single shot 410 shotgun in a Waikato maize paddock



Asha Bully and her cuzzies gathering some good curry meat

THE WORLD'S SOFTEST SEMI AUTOMATIC

A400 Xtreme PLUS

NEW



MAX 7 CAMO

12GA 26/28/30" KICK OFF PLUS **$4,099**
LH 12GA 28" **$4,099**

NEW CAMO MODEL 2024

The A400 Extreme Plus shoots 2.75", 3", and 3.5" shells interchangeably without having to make adjustments. To hold up to long days of pounding heavy waterfowl loads, this shotgun features advanced recoil-reduction systems, such as Kick-Off Mega, Kick-Off3, and Soft-Comb stock, which reduce felt recoil by as much as 70%.

KICK OFF M KICK OFF 3 UNICO STEELIUM

OTHER A400 XTREME PLUS MODELS



AQUATECH GREY VEIL 12GA 28" **$4,199**



Lefthand option available

BLACK SYNTHETIC 12GA 26"/28"/30" **$3,899**
12GA LH 28" & 20GA 28" **$3,899**

A400 LITE



NEW

MAX 7 CAMO 12GA 28" & 20GA 28" **$3,499**



BLACK SYNTHETIC 12GA 3" 28" Kick-Off Plus RH **$3,299** LH **$3,299**
20GA 28" Kick-Off Plus **$3,299** Compact youth 20GA, 26"/28" adjustable **$3,099**

A400 UPLAND



12GA 26"/28"/30" & 20GA 28" **$3,899** 20GA 28" NON KO **$3,699**

A300 ULTIMA™



MAX5 12GA & 20GA 28" **$2,549**

BLACK SYNTHETIC 12GA & 20GA 28" **$2,349**

+ KICK-OFF RECOIL SYSTEM + ENLARGED CONTROLS + WIDER STEPPED RIB

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY BERETTANEWZEALAND.COM

BERETTA



WRITTEN BY - COREY CARSTON

TOP TIPS FOR A GREAT SEASON

By the time you read this the start of the season will be right around the corner, and anticipation and excitement levels will be through the roof

Some of these tips may come just a little bit too late to be useful to you this year, but you can refer to them next season.

GETTING AN EARLY START

How are all the jobs you promised to complete in the mai mai progressing? That floor you said you would replace or the leaking roof that needs some TLC - are they done?

Chances are that they're not. I must admit I'm often as guilty of this as the next hunter.

If I were an Opening Weekend pond hunter, I would want to keep the ducks as relaxed and settled as possible. So, I would be getting any repairs or alterations, and the bulk of the scrubbing done as early in the new year as possible.

I try to get most of the scrubbing done as early as possible, and if things lose their colour and do not look as natural as I'd like, I sneak back after dark when the ducks have left.

It is not hard to love your pond to death, so limit the time you spend there making a ruckus and scaring your ducks.

FEEDING

If you are feeding your area, start early. Why? By doing this, you can get ducks settled early before others start, and hopefully, most of them will remain on your pond instead of having to go to other places to feed.

I have said before ducks are rather simple creatures. They need food, water, a place they feel safe and, in dangerous weather situations, shelter. They also need grit and some place they can preen themselves. If you can supply all these requirements, why would they leave? They will only leave if scared away, so remember every time you move them off or scare them, you are educating them.

Therefore, if you are feeding your area do it at a time when you are not going to be disturbing actively feeding ducks. There is no point rocking up there and constantly scaring away the very birds you are hoping to hunt in the next few weeks.

By constantly scaring them away, you run the risk of pushing them onto the neighbouring pond, or worse still, out of the area. It could also make them nocturnal, and they may only return to feed well after shooting hours when it is too dark to hunt.

If using automatic feeders top them up when ducks are not there. This could be early morning before work or mid-afternoon if you are feeding for an evening hunt. Just make sure you do it before the ducks start returning.

Plan to set the timer for the time that you want birds to arrive. There is no point in having it going at a time that is not going to benefit your hunting.

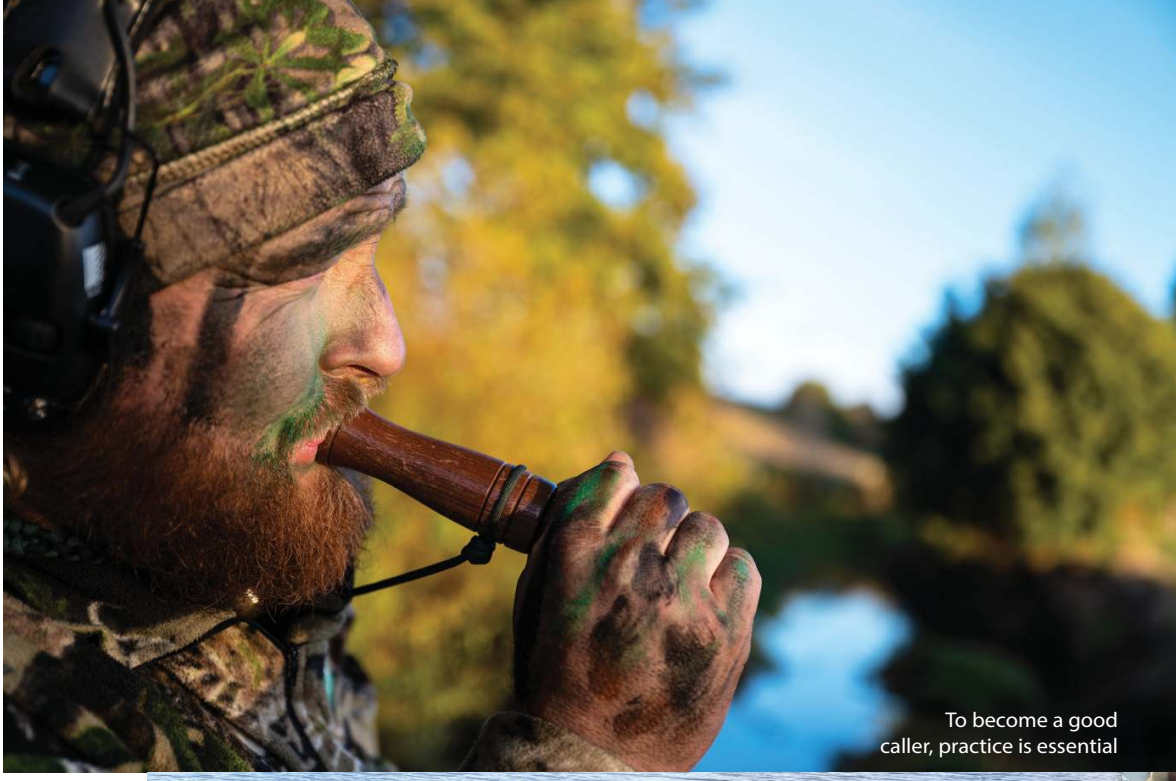
DOGS

Where is your dog at this very moment? Possibly inside lounging on

the couch, or in its kennel where it's been for ages (and chances are that it's fat and more than likely unfit).

A fit dog, like a fit hunter, has far more energy and stamina and will hunt far better and longer than its unfit companions.

I usually have my dogs hunting geese throughout the summer to get them fit. After a long off-season, it's great to get them back to hunting. Fishing is a terrific way to not only spend time outdoors but also to get them fit. I am constantly crossing rivers, and where I go the dog must follow. Swimming is great minimal-impact fitness activity for a fat dog.



To become a good caller, practice is essential



A fit, well conditioned dog will hunt harder for longer. Kiera showing us how it's done on jumbo sized swans

If you are hunting riverbeds or stoney ground, you need to toughen up the pads of their feet to avoid them tearing. Nothing will ruin a hunt quicker than a lame dog that has torn or damaged its feet. Often these injuries can be serious and can affect your mate for weeks, and the only way to fix it is rest and keeping them off their feet – not ideal in the middle of the season!

The best thing to do is take them walking on rougher ground, as this will condition their feet and toughen them up. Tar seal, gravel roads and river gravel are all good and will also help get them and you fit.

CALLS AND CALLING

Opening morning dawns bright and clear. Just as the sun starts to creep over the horizon the first mallards can be heard in the distance. You raise your call to your mouth for the first time for what you hope will be a productive day and let rip with notes to entice those wary mallards. Unfortunately, the noises you produce do not sound anything like a mallard; instead, is something like a chainsaw with a bad cold. One look from your mate standing beside you is enough to retire the call for the rest of the day.

To become a good caller, practice is essential. Unless you have a natural talent, you need to put in the effort. Take your calls out when you are down at the pond scrubbing or feeding and give it a blow. Or wait until the lady of the house is out and do some practising around home.

Reeds can and do disintegrate. They are a soft type of plastic that delaminates over time. As they bounce up and down off your tone board they will crack and burr, and when they do they're stuffed. So, if it does not sound right chuck them out and replace them with some new ones.

If you decide to get a new call do not leave it to the last minute. My good mate works in a hunting store, and he has mentioned several times that some customers come in at the last minute looking for calls. Often, what they want has sold out, and they must make do with, say, a single reed whilst all their previous calls have been doubles. If you know anything about calling then you will know that they are vastly different beasts to use, and produce different sounds.

GET IN EARLY

I know this is not always possible a but complete any planned purchases as soon as practical. This is especially so when purchasing a new shotgun.

There is that old saying that practice makes perfect, and never a truer word was spoken.

The more time you spend using something the more familiar you will become with it.

KEEP AN EYE OPEN

As we know, ducks are extremely mobile birds that quite naturally need to feed constantly to survive. Their wings make it easy for them to seek out food in other areas, often a good distance away.

While I am driving around ducky areas, I am always looking for opportunities to hunt. This could be a harvested grain paddock loaded with ducks, or a wet paddock. It might be that you notice a dairy farm that had crop paddocks harvested early in the year, knowing that come mid to late May they will start feeding it out to the cows before they dry them off, thus creating a great feeding option for ducks, and sometimes a great hunt.



No pidgeon decoys no worries. Jack and I making a decent stack of them over our full body mallard decoys. Great practice ahead of the season



We often talk about getting out before the big day and busting some clay birds to get our eye in. This a great idea but if you do not get the time to do so, becoming familiar is just as important. Fumbling around in the dark trying to remember how to put it together, or how to load it will not endear you to your mates



Without a well maintained boat and motor stellar hunts like this one wouldn't be possible

MAINTENANCE

As I write this my outboard boat motor is at the shop getting a good servicing. Last time I used her, she was not idling as good as I liked. I could have gotten away with it, but I rely on my boat so much, often in horrific and dangerous situations, so why would I run the risk?

Vehicle maintenance is crucial for hunting, as a breakdown in difficult terrain could be risky. Travelling long distances to hunt makes it important to ensure that vehicles are in excellent condition to avoid a breakdown miles from the road end. It goes without saying but sort out the decoys. They may need to be painted or replaced, or the weights and string may require an overhaul. Better to get onto it early on than opening day eve.

START A JOURNAL

If you're anything like me and spend a reasonable amount of time in the field, then over the years, one hunt can often blend into another, and it can be hard to keep track of them.

Photos are an effective way to remember a good hunt, but you may have a hunt that does not live up to expectations and no photos are taken.

Keeping a journal is a terrific way to record what happened. These days I do not get too hung up on numbers, but I do like to record who I was with, the location, the weather and wind conditions, what I did right and also what I did wrong. If I am hunting a tidal area I will also record what the tide was doing and other relevant conditions.

Additionally, I record observations that may help me in following seasons, such as ducks spotted on old mate's place when there was a nor'west wind and so on.

I'll also note what I might need for the next season.

GUN LAWS

Make sure you know the new gun laws and understand how they work, and our obligations around their transport and storage.

On the Friday before last opening weekend, there were numerous stories of the police pulling over hunters travelling to their weekend hunting spots to check vehicles and how firearms were transported. From what I have heard, they were rather lenient as lots of hunters were not aware of the changes. This year, I'd imagine they will not be nearly as tolerant. Remember firearms-related offences as well as any wildlife offences can result in you being deemed not to be a fit and proper person, and you may have your licence revoked.

GUN FAMILIARISATION

We often talk about getting out before the big day and busting some claybirds to get our eye in. This a great idea but if you do not get the time to do so, becoming familiar is just as important. Fumbling around in the dark trying to remember how to put it together, or how to load it will not endear you to your mates who are patiently waiting for you to hurry up and flick off the head light.

I find that hunting geese are a great way to get some valuable practise. If you do not goose hunt or there are none in your area, another good option is the humble rock pigeon. A lot of hunters are put off decoying them as they do not have pigeon decoys. **This should not be a consideration, as if you have duck decoys you can easily decoy most pigeons.**

Try to use predominantly drakes as they more closely resemble their grey colouration. If you have a spinner then use it. Pigeons love spinners. If for some reason you do not have decoys, then often just a spinner will suffice. When you shoot your first ones simply place them belly down on the ground and use them as natural decoys.

HAVE A PLAN B

I know I have written about this more than once, but I still hear of hunters that put all their eggs in one basket, and when hunting time comes around, something happens to ruin their hunt. This could be a flood

or a drought, or might be something as simple as a west wind with rain when it was forecast to be an easterly and sunny. Sometimes, there has been an unexpected and unknown change of ownership, and you are no longer able to hunt or access the area.

By having a plan A, B and sometimes C can often transform a potentially ruined hunted into one you remember forever.

Be organised. It's self-explanatory really.

SET YOURSELF SOME GOALS

It could be as straight-forward as just making it more enjoyable, or maybe it's about shooting more ducks. It also could be hunting that spot you have always driven past and thought about hunting but for some reason or other have not. You may have thought about pursuing a different species that you have not already targeted.

This year my goal is to complete a couple of road trips. It's long overdue for me to leave the hunting mecca of the South and visit Ellesmere, which has been on my mind for many years. To be honest, I am not even that worried about harvesting a substantial number of birds - it is going to be more about the experience of hunting in a different area.



If I were an Opening Weekend pond hunter, I would want to keep the ducks as relaxed and settled as possible. So, I would be getting any repairs or alterations, and the bulk of the scrubbing done as early in the new year as possible

If time and money permit, it is up to the 'other' island to chase a bird that has intrigued and captivated me since I was a young lad, the ring-necked pheasant. After speaking with several enthusiastic hunters from up north who have long extended an invitation for me to join them, it is time to stop dreaming and just do it.

One big goal we should all have in common is to introduce a newcomer to our sport, perhaps your child or grandchild. Or it could be the neighbour down the road, or a work mate that has always wanted to go but did not have anywhere to hunt.

By introducing someone else, even if they do not continue with the sport, they get an understanding of what we do and why we do it. Years down the track we may need their support.

The biggest thing is to keep it fun. If you are not enjoying yourself then why bother?

Hope you have a great and productive season.



HUNTER NZ

FROM $625 (TAN)





$615



$1125



$625



$199



$450

SPOONZILLA $165





$195

$99



MOTION NOT SEEN BEFORE





















HIGDON SPECIAL

XS PULSATOR $299



XS SPLASHER FLASHER $399



CRAZY KICKER $299



XS FLOATING FLASHER $299



JJ LARES



CUPWING



POWER CALLS



SOME OF THE BEST PRICING AROUND

ONLINE ONLY HUNTERNZ.COM

sales@hunternz.com

Ph: 027 249 5205

GO ONLINE FOR OUR FULL RANGE OF PRODUCTS!

Think safety this duck hunting season

Nothing is as exciting as settling into the maimai on the first Saturday of May. You've waited months for this day to roll around again – opening weekend of duck season is here!

The maimai is full of friends, family and the dog. While you can't control whether the birds will be plentiful, you know keeping yourself, and everyone in your group safe takes more than just luck.

The best hunters follow the seven basic rules of firearms safety and insist that others do the same. This duck season we urge hunters everywhere to have a plan for their maimai, so everyone knows what to do before the first ducks arrive. An organised maimai helps with a successful hunt. A good bag, and a safe, enjoyable weekend has nothing to do with luck.



The more people around, the greater the risks

The maimai can be a busy place, so make a plan before the ducks start landing. Swinging your shotgun while following gamebirds can shift your aim into an unsafe direction. Agree in advance your safe firing zones, and stick to them. Stay aware of where your companions are.

Quick tips

- Never point, or allow others to point, a firearm at any person!
- All hunters agree at the start of the day on the direction they will shoot and keep to this plan.
- Shotguns that are not in use should be in a firearm holder/rest, unloaded, and with the muzzle pointing in a safe direction.

Treat every firearm in the maimai as loaded

Treat every shotgun as if it is loaded – no matter how sure you are that it's not. That means keeping the muzzle pointing away from yourself and other people, finger off the trigger, and having control of the shotgun at all times.

Quick tips

- Treat your shotgun as if it is always loaded.
- Do not take anyone else's word that a firearm is unloaded – always check.
- Never lean your shotguns where they could slide or be knocked over.

Save any drinks for after the hunt

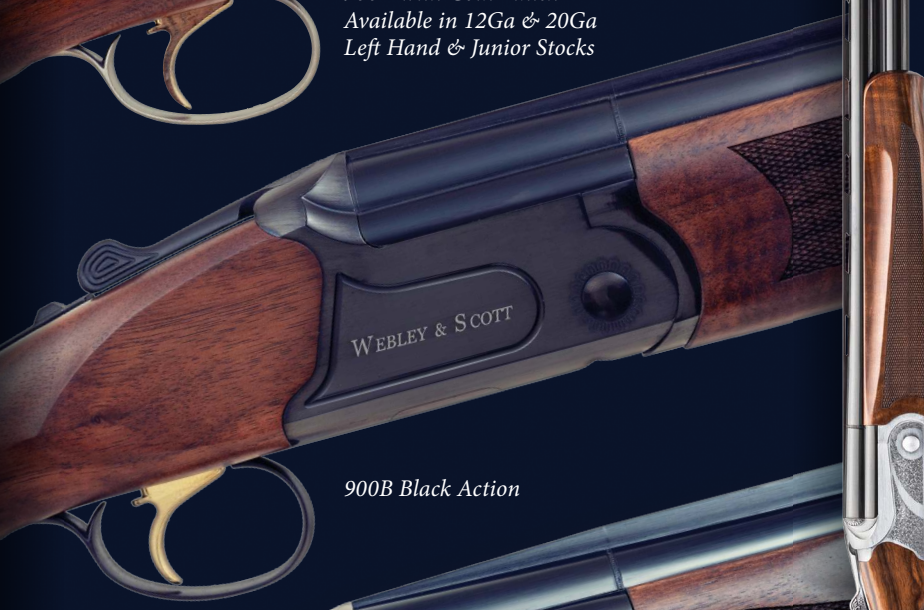
We know opening day is a great opportunity for people to get together. But keep the drinks on ice until the hunt is over. Alcohol and firearms don't mix! Stay sharp. Save the refreshment until after you've safely locked your guns away for the day.

Quick tips

- Do not drink alcohol before or while using your firearms.
- Do not hunt with anyone else who is, or has been, drinking.
- Gears before beers – safely lock your firearms away before going for a drink.



900X with Coin Finish
Available in 12Ga & 20Ga
Left Hand & Junior Stocks



900B Black Action



900XS Competition



1000 Series 20g

Vantage



X-12 Semi Auto Walnut



X-12 Semi Auto Synthetic Camo



X-12 Semi Auto Synthetic Black

WEBLEY & SCOTT
GUNMAKERS 1790

The attention to design and detail ensures every Webley & Scott shotgun delivers precision engineered quality from the inside, out.

Our shotgun action is machine sculpted from a single steel alloy block. While this process is more expensive, the result is a more solid, reliable and durable shotgun action designed to last well beyond it's impressive 5 year warranty.

Ask any retailer which action is more durable – alloy or steel? Their answer will be steel. A Webley & Scott - no compromise on quality.

5 YEAR WARRANTY
WEBLEY & SCOTT

Bold & Intuitive...

Affordable. Reliable.

Over and Under
RRP From $1,499

Semi Auto
RRP From $699

Get Ready for Duck Season
Available from all good gun shops
Ask your local Dealer

OUTDOOR SPORTS NEW ZEALAND

outdoorsportsnz.com

Follow us on socials
outdoorsportsnz

WHAT'S NEW: APR MAY



RAB XENAIR ALPINE LIGHT JACKET

EXPERTLY BALANCING WARMTH AND BREATHABILITY, THIS LIGHTWEIGHT INSULATED JACKET OFFERS ALL-DAY COMFORT WITHOUT THE NEED TO CHANGE LAYERS, KEEPING YOU MOVING WHATEVER THE CONDITIONS.

The updated design is made with a new liner made of 100% recycled Polyamide, delivering an unprecedented 10x increase in air permeability compared to its predecessor.

The Xenair Alpine Light jacket expertly balances elemental protection with superior moisture management during high-aerobic pursuits making it the perfect layer for unpredictable mountain weather.

It features a 20D Pertex® Quantum Air outer with a fluorocarbon-free DWR for enhanced moisture expulsion, ensuring prolonged comfort for active mountain enthusiasts. PrimaLoft® Gold Active+ insulation, incorporating 55% recycled content, offers superior thermal regulation and comfort.

Weight: 310g (m), 270g (w).

RRP: $379.95

Distributed by Outfitters:
www.outfitters.co.nz



DIGITAL SPEEDY DEFLATORS

DIGITAL SPEEDY DEFLATORS SCREW ON AND ALLOW RAPID AIR-DOWN OF EVEN THE LARGEST TYRES, PROVIDING MORE ACCURATE RESULTS.

- 55mm digital gauge for improved accuracy.
- Included 4-in-1 valve tool and handy storage pouch.
- Braided rubber hose with swivel fittings for ease of use.
- Rubber anti-shock bumper.
- Rapid deflate function with brass chuck.

RRP: $71.00
www.ironman4x4.co.nz



SEASUCKER 2 CUP HOLDER VERTICAL

JUST THE BASICS HERE – IF YOU WANT TO HOLD A COUPLE OF CANS OR BOTTLES ON A VERTICAL SURFACE LIKE THE SIDE OF YOUR UTE, TRUCK, CONSOLE OR BAIT TANK, THIS CUP HOLDER IS WHAT YOU NEED.

It attaches with the powerful-yet-simple-to-use SeaSucker vacuum mount, which means you can put it where you need it, when you need it. Also available in white and horizontal options. Cup Holders come in more sizes ranging from 1 cup through to 5 cup holders. All products come with a 5 year warranty. Be ready for any adventure with SeaSucker.

RRP: $182.85

Go online to check out the range:
www.seasucker.nz



T3X LITE S/S BUSH HUNTER 2.0 16" MT D14

GREAT VALUE WITH THE BENEFITS & PERFORMANCE OF A T3X LITE.

- T3X Lite S/S Bush Hunter Rifle: $1,899
- Burris Fullfield IV Scope 2.5-10x42mm Ballistic E3: $629.99
- Tikka Ringmounts 1" Medium Black: $99.99
- Hardy Compact Gen 6 Over Barrel Suppressor: $549.99

TOTAL RRP VALUE: $3,179
PACKAGE ONLY: $2,699
SAVE: $480

Exclusive to NZ. LH option available: $2,799

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY BERETTA NZ

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY SPIKA



SPIKA EDGE JACKET

GET OUTSIDE IN SPIKA'S NEW HUNTING JACKET. 30,000MM WATERPROOF AND BREATHABLE, IT'S LIGHTWEIGHT AND PACKABLE WITHOUT COMPROMISE ON DURABILITY.

With thoughtful design features like pit zips and conveniently positioned deep pockets, the Spika Edge Jacket will have you ready for any adventure. Available in Biarri Camo or Olive.

RRP: $399.99



SPIKA TERRA V2 JACKET

SPIKA'S NEW WATERPROOF DOWN JACKET – 750 LOFT, DWR-TREATED DOWN WITH A 10,000MM WATERPROOF MEMBRANE.

Welded baffles and tape seam-sealed to keep you warm and dry no matter the adventure. Using 100% ripstop fabric, the new Spika Terra is available in Navy or Black.

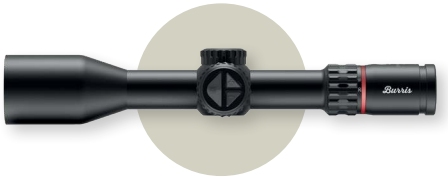
RRP: $399.99

Find your local stockist at www.spika.co.nz

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY BERETTA NZ



FOREVER WARRANTY
NO QUESTIONS ASKED



BURRIS ELIMINATOR 6 RIFLESCOPE 4-20X52MM

THE BURRIS ELIMINATOR 6 IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER SCOPE.

Combining four tools into one advanced optic. Eliminating problems, so you can focus on the shot.

RRP: $5,099

www.berettanewzealand.com

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY KIWI ULTRALIGHT



KIWI ULTRALIGHT 3X3M TARP

A NO-FRILLS ULTRALIGHT SHELTER FOR THE HUNTER ON THE MOVE.

Kiwi Ultralight tarps are made in locally in Nelson, New Zealand from UltraTNT. This fabric does not rip, does not absorb water, and will never sag or stretch out of shape.

This large flat tarp is made using fully bonded construction to achieve a 140,000mm waterproof rating. It includes 6 tie-out points and is designed to be used either as your emergency shelter or as a complete bug-proof setup when combined with the ultralight bivy add-on. Pitches quickly using trekking poles in a variety of configurations.

This tarp weighs only 350g and covers an area up to 9m^2.

RRP: $485

www.kiwiultralight.co.nz

TRUE – FLITE

FOR NEW ZEALAND MADE CUSTOM RIFLE BARRELS...

Contact the team at True-Flite NZ Ltd
We aim to exceed your expectations!

www.trueflitеriflebarrels.co.nz
Telephone: 06 8683450
Email: trueflite@yahoo.co.nz

Cobbler Glenn for stitching, patching, heeling, soling, stretching, zips, bags, backlinings and hobnailing boots"



"I will heel you & save your sole"

COBBLER GLENN

www.mcdiarmids.co.nz



DELUGE JACKET AND PANTS

THE PINNACLE IN DURABILITY AND FUNCTION. DAY-IN, DAY-OUT PERFORMANCE HUNTING IN THE MOUNTAINS AND THRASHING ON THE FARM IS WHAT THE DELUGE WAS CREATED FOR.

The Hydrafuse® NyoSTEEL™ fabric is made up of a heavy-duty nylon outer for high abrasion resistance, a cutting-edge waterproof/breathable internal membrane to keep out torrential rain and pump out internal steam, and a hardy internal backing for complete durability.

The body mapped design places 500D nylon in the highest wear areas and 320D nylon in the highest movement areas.

www.hunterselement.co.nz



CL COMPANION HABICHT

THE CL COMPANION HABICHT WAS CREATED IN CELEBRATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF SWAROVSKI OPTIK AND LIMITED TO A TOTAL OF 1,000 PIECES.

Each pair of binoculars is treated by us with the greatest care and receives a unique certificate. Provided with an individual number written by hand.

RRP: $3,720.00

www.swarovskioptik.com



COLD STEEL COMPETITION THROWING AXE

PROCESS GAME, CUT WOOD, AND THROW THIS AXE LIKE AN 80'S ICON.

The hickory handle glides out of the hand like silk sliding over skin. This creates a consistent result, which is hours of fun.

The Cold Steel Competition Throwing Axe is razor sharp and will stick into pine bark or any type of wooden target. Just get one.

www.nzammo.co.nz

ADVERTISE WITH US NZ HUNTER

BEST VALUE

NZ HUNTER MAGAZINE PROVIDES THE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY IN THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY

Email luke@nzhunter.co.nz

ANIMAL SKIN TANNING SERVICES
New Zealand Made

-Tanning of all animal skins from rabbit to cow and everything in between.

-D.I.Y. Tanning kits for at home use.

-100% New Zealand made products.

-We manufacture and sell animal skin rugs and throws and other products at wholesale pricing.

-Tannery & Showroom based in Invercargill

Dan Dawson – 027 281 3026
dan@animalskintanningservices.co.nz
118 Crinan Street – Invercargill

www.animalskintanningservices.co.nz

MOUNTAINHIGH
RUGGED OUTDOOR GEAR



QUALITY HARD WEARING CANVAS GOODS
www.mountainhighclothing.co.nz | 03 614 7731



WRITTEN BY ~ RICHARD HINGSTON

SLOW-COOKED & SMOKED FRONT SHOULDER OF VENISON STEAK

"Venison front shoulder steak?" I hear you ask. It's not typically done, and those words are rarely used together

I have been perfecting this recipe for a while and believe I've finally got it right. I tested it on the front shoulder of a two-year-old Red just to be sure. It certainly got the thumbs-up from those who tried it.



This recipe is divided into four simple key tasks – however, you will need some specialist cooking equipment. It is a great dish to do in advance and is easy to serve, or equally good to do for a bulk catering trip, as mentioned in the previous edition.

The four key tasks are: smoking, sous vide cook, pressing overnight and BBQ or grilling.

Some of you may not be familiar with sous vide cookery. The method is not new as it's been around since the 1970s, but now equipment is easier to obtain, and there are many options on the market.

Sous vide – pronounced (sue-veed), is a cooking technique where the item to be cooked is placed in a tightly sealed vacuum-packed bag and then placed into a water bath at a precise temperature for a period of time. The sous vide stirrer or circulator circulates the water in the vessel thus delivering a consistent product every time, regardless of your skill level in the kitchen. It sounds very scientific and lab coat-ish, but really, it's simple. The downside is that it will take longer, as you are cooking at lower temperatures, but it will be more consistent, and if you use it to cook steak then you will never have another piece of overcooked meat again!! Many restaurants use this method nowadays. You can tell if a steak is cooked sous vide by the internal colour -if it is medium at 55°C, then it will be pink all the way through apart from where it has been sealed on the outside, and if cooked traditionally then there will be a colour gradient throughout the meat.

So why cook like this? Think of it like this: your hand is the protein. Place it over a high heat and hold it there, but don't remove it. What happens? You notice that you tighten your muscles trying to resist the heat (don't do this, I don't want you to burn yourself). On the other hand, if you run a hot bath at, say, 42°C and hop in, your muscles relax. Therefore, the protein is more relaxed, and the meat is softer or more tender. That's why the meat is cooked all the way through to that precise set temperature with no chance of overcooking as it can't get hotter.



Glasseye Creek Butter

- 250gm butter. soft
- 100gm Glasseye Creek sauce
- 1Tbsp garlic, crushed
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp tarragon, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp gherkins, chopped
- 1 ½ tsp capers chopped
- 1 ½ Tbsp smoked paprika
- ½ lemon, zest and juice

Method

Place the butter into a large bowl.

Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Taste and season with salt.

Spoon the mixture onto some greaseproof paper and roll up into a tight cylindrical tube and refrigerate until set.

When ready, remove from the fridge, cut into portion-size pieces and place on top of the venison to serve. Alternatively, place butter into a pan and cook the venison in it.



Sous vide at 86°C for ten hours



Recipe

1 x front shoulder of venison, skinned, and any damaged or bruised areas trimmed up.

Seasoning of salt and pepper or a BBQ rub of your choice.

Method

Season or rub the shoulder of venison, smoke at 135°C /275°F for four hours, spritzing (as noted in the previous edition about smoking).

Allow to cool slightly, then tightly vacuum pack.

You may need to fold the shank back on itself to get it to fit into a bag, and also into the vessel that you will cook it in.

Sous vide at 86°C for ten hours.

Carefully remove the bag and lay on a tray, cut open and remove the shoulder. Gently twist and remove the bone and any gristle or cartilage that can be on the end, then the leg bone, to completely de-bone the whole front. The remaining liquid can be kept for a gravy or stock.

Prepare a baking tray by placing a couple of layers of cling film over it, and then gently place the whole shoulder on top Gently cover with another couple of pieces of cling film and place a flat tray on top of the venison. Put a weight evenly on top to weigh it down but not make it into schnitzel! Perhaps use a couple of bottles of milk or whatever you have in the fridge to weigh it down, and refrigerate overnight.

In the morning, remove the weights and cling film, trim the sides of the venison, and then cut into steak-size pieces. Alternately, just vacuum pack it and freeze for another day. Preheat your barbeque. Lightly oil the venison and season with salt and pepper. Grill on all four sides with fresh sprigs of rosemary, and serve with either your favourite barbeque sauce or, on top of some mash potato and gravy made from the left over cooking liquid, or perhaps with some Glasseye Creek butter!



FOX & FRANZ HELISERVICES

South Westland's Premier Helicopter Transport Company
servicing hunters for over 30 years

"No one knows more about where to hunt in South Westland than James Scott!"
GREG DULEY, NZ HUNTER

CONTACT US TO START YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

James Scott: p. 03 751 0853 e. fox_heli@xtra.co.nz
Franz Josef Office: p. 03 752 0793 e. info@scenic-flights.co.nz
Haast Office: p. 03 750 0111



NZ HUNTER MAGAZINE

Take out a Subscription Sign-up today!

AND BE INTO WIN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PRIZES



PRIZES TO BE WON

1. A return helicopter flight with Helisika |$1300

$1300 of flight time with world-famous Sika country helicopter company Helisika, based at Poronui, Taupo.

2. Fenix HM65R and HT18 - x2! RRP $920

Two combination prizes of an Fenix headlamp and torch to be won. The Fenix HM65R is a magnesium bodied rechargeable headlamp designed to endure all the elements. And the hand-held hunting HT18 can throw a maximum 1500 lumens 925m!

3. Browning Dark Ops | RRP $389

For the best invisible flash trail camera in the smallest case size, look no further than the Dark Ops Max HD Plus. 20 MP picture quality, 1600 x 900p HD+ videos with sound, lightning fast 0.135 - 0.7 second adjustable trigger speeds, and superior battery life

PRIZES WILL BE DRAWN 20th MAY 2023

All subscribers will be eligible for prize draw

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: 1. This promotion offer is only available in conjunction with subscription sales. Drawn on 22nd March 2024, and the winners will be given the choice of the prizes in the order they are drawn. 2. If NZ Hunter is unable to contact any winner after 1 month following the original draw date, having made reasonable efforts to do so, that winner's entry will be declared invalid and NZ Hunter reserves the right in its absolute discretion to randomly draw a new winner of that prize from eligible participants on the same terms and conditions as the original draw. 3. The judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 4. By entering this competition you agree to these terms and conditions.
5. The winners names and photos may be used by NZ Hunter for reasonable publicity purposes. NZ Hunter collects and holds the personal information provided with each entry to be used for the purposes of the promotion and in particular to notify prize winners and to verify prize winners identities. Entrants have the right to access and correct their personal information. 6. NZ Hunter reserves the right to extend, alter or conclude the promotion at any time should circumstances dictate. Should any disputes arise, the decision of NZ Hunter is final.

NAMED SUBSCRIBER

Name .....

Address .....

Suburb..... City ..... Post Code .....

Phone..... Email .....

Start with Issue No. .....

IS THIS A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION: ☐ Yes ☐ No Gift Givers Name .....

If yes please provide the following information. Gift Givers Email: .....

Where would you like the gift certificate to be emailed/posted: .....

PLEASE SELECT (TICK) AND FILL OUT THE APPROPRIATE BOXES BELOW:

One year (6 issues)
- ☐ $62.00 NEW ZEALAND (includes freight with in New Zealand)
- ☐ $128.00 AUSTRALIA (includes freight to an Australian destination)
- ☐ $164.50 WORLDWIDE (includes freight to an overseas destination)

☐ Internet banking (account no: 03 1353 0160397 00) Please include subscriber's name in the payment advice

☐ Charge to my Visa ☐ Charge to my Mastercard

Card Number .....

Expiry Date..... Card Security Code ___ ___ _

Name on card ..... Signed .....
(please print)

POST TO: NZ Hunter Magazine, 150 Pamotumotu Road, RD3, Te Awamutu 3873
EMAIL: subs@nzhunter.co.nz

Quick Finder

Advertisers Listing

Animal Skin Tanning Services 117
Advanced Archery....101
AJ Productions 23
Backcountry Cuisine....84
Backcountry Trust....45
Backlanz....62
Beretta....105,107
Blue Duck Packrafts 81
bootsandgear.com....97
Diamond Group....111
DPT Machinists....5
DTM Wheels....Inside Front Cover
DTS Chillers....96
Firearms Safety Authority....113
Fox&Franz Heliservices....119
Fox Glacier Store....97
GAC....4
Garmin....35
Glacier Southern Lakes Heli....99
Gunworks....87
Hardy Engineering....27,33
Hunter NZ....112
Hunters Element....17
Hunting and Fishing....67
Huntsman Thermal....75
Ironman 4x4....16
Kilwell....93
Kiwi Ultralight....27
McDiarmids Footwear....116
Mountain Adventure....62
Mountain High Clothing....117
Nioa New Zealand....39
NZ Ammo....Back Cover
NZ Asia....53
NZDA....84
NZ Police....69
Outdoor Sports - Ridgeline....74
Outdoor Sports....114
Owl Optics....46,47
PointsSouth....99
Precision Heli....97
RAB....11
Spika....52,73
SR Marston....85
Steve's Wholesales....81
Stoney Creek....77
Southern Lakes Helicopters....79
Swarovski ....Inside Back Cover
Swazi....63
Te Anau Helicopters....89,97
Trueflite....116
Tyremax....57
Workshop Innovation....93

Contact us for Back Issues Now



EL RANGE 32
GROUND-
BREAKINGLY
LIGHT



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK

SEE THE *UNSEEN*

SWAROVSKI OPTIK NEW ZEALAND LTD. | TEL. 04-595 4286 | INFO-AUNZ@SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM | SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM

PROOF®
Research



REMOVE DOUBT
BE YOUR BEST

It's formidable what can be achieved when you have a rifle this accurate. Every time.

Shop stock at www.nzammo.co.nz

Contact us for special orders or delivery through your local retailer.

DISTRIBUTED BY
NEW ZEALAND Ammunition COMPANY LIMITED

Email: info@nzammo.co.nz | www.nzammo.co.nz

NZD $12.90
ISSN 1178-007X
9 771178 007009